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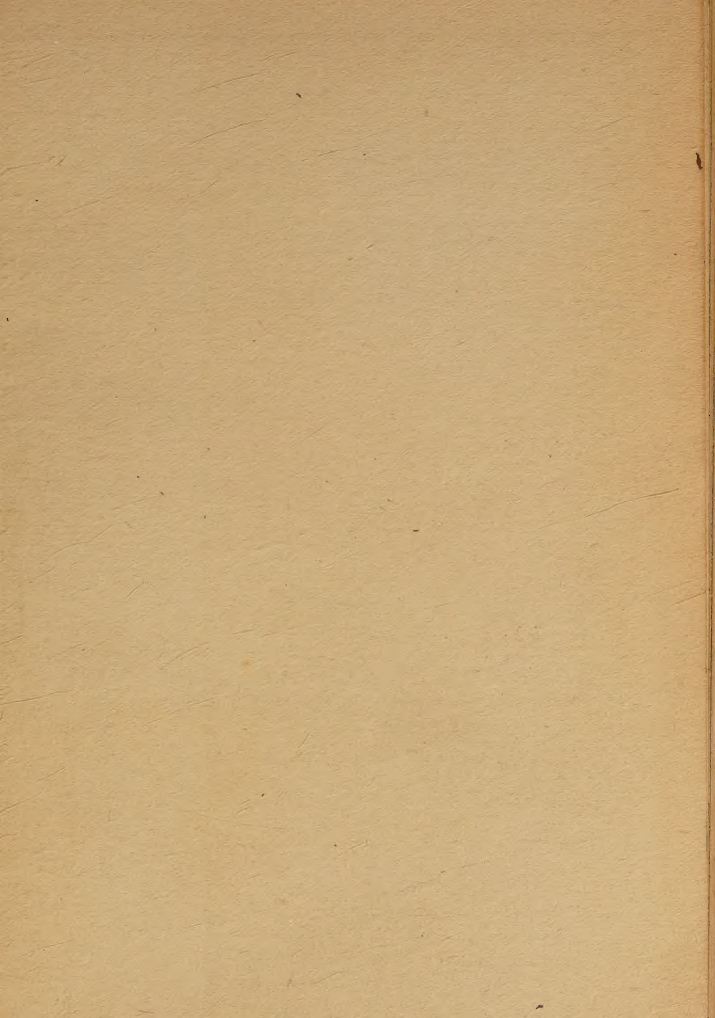
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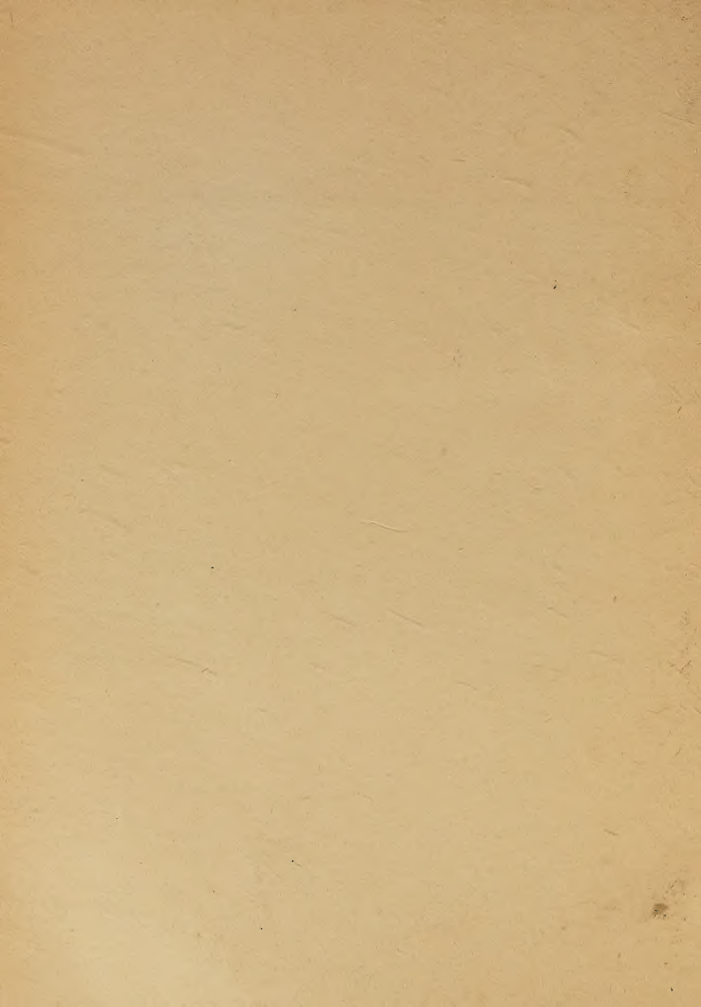
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The Arts of the Church

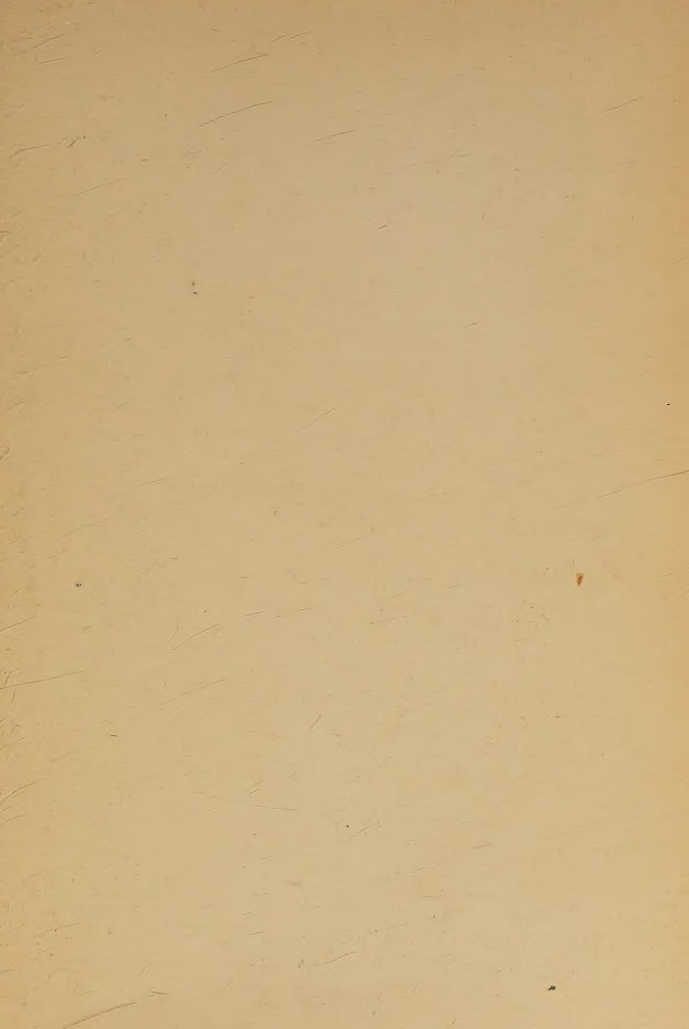
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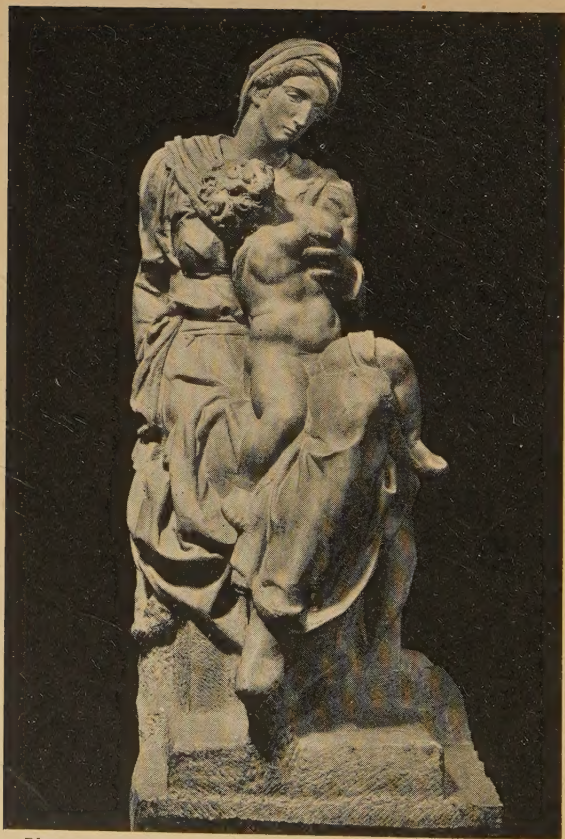


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[Anderson.

MADONNA AND CHILD, IN THE NEW SACRISTY OF S. LORENZO
AT FLORENCE. (Michelangelo.)

The Arts of the Church

The Decorative Arts in the Service of the Church

BY

FRANCIS SYDNEY UNWIN

WITH FORTY-SIX ILLUSTRATIONS

including Two Drawings by the Author

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EDITOR'S NOTE

THE little volumes in the ARTS OF THE CHURCH series are intended to provide information in an interesting as well as an accurate form about the various arts which have clustered round the public worship of GOD in the Church of CHRIST. Though few have the opportunity of knowing much about them, there are many who would like to possess the main outlines about those arts whose productions are so familiar to the Christian, and so dear. The authors will write for the average intelligent man who has not had the time to study all these matters for himself; and they will therefore avoid technicalities, while endeavouring at the same time to present the facts with a fidelity which will not, it is hoped, be unacceptable to the specialist.



AUTHOR'S PREFACE

DURING the time that the Author has been engaged upon the following pages, he has had recourse to the work of so many authorities upon the various branches of his subject that he wishes immediately to acknowledge his indebtedness. Much has been quoted, much practically transcribed, from the following :—*Ecclesiastical Art in Germany during the Middle Ages*, by Dr. Wilhelm Lubke, *Mediaeval Art*, by Mr. W. R. Lethaby, *Glass Painting*, by Charles Winston, the "Introduction" to the volume on *Early Christian and Byzantine Antiquities*, published by the Trustees of the British Museum, and many other works.

His thanks are also due to several friends who have advised him on technical

matters relating to crafts of which he has had no practical experience ; and, above all, to his brother, Ernest Unwin, for much able advice in the treatment of his subject, and no little help in the actual writing of the manuscript.

F. S. U.

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PART I



CHAPTER I

Introductory

IT would be impossible to treat so wide a subject as *The Decorative Arts in the service of the Church* within the compass of a single volume, were it intended that the result should be in any way exhaustive.

That, however, is not the purpose of this little book, for, were it possible merely to mention all the various means by which men have beautified and adorned the buildings, the furniture, and the vessels which the Church has used, the boundaries of the subject would be so indeterminate that we should become involved in a general treatise upon architecture, upon symbolism, and, indeed, upon the whole realm of Art.

We shall approach the subject in such a way as to discover, if possible, the *spirit* in which the craftsmen of each succeeding age have expressed themselves in wood and stone, in metal and glass, and by so doing have given outward beauty to the worship of God.

For this purpose we shall divide the history of Christian architecture and the attendant arts into four clearly-defined, though overlapping, periods—the *EARLY CHRISTIAN*, of which the key-note was a symbolism, that sought beauty, not for itself, but for the ideas which it conveyed ; the *MEDIAEVAL PERIOD* (roughly the thousand years from A.D. 300 to A.D. 1300), which, though divided into two great styles—the Byzantine or Eastern, and the Gothic or Western—was yet an organic whole, in which classic art gradually acquired an epic interest and human meaning by the introduction of Oriental mysticism and the Christian spirit ; the *RENAISSANCE*, which began with the

revival of learning, passed on with ever-increasing power to an age in which the greatest geniuses of the Christian world carried their art into every field of decorative work, and (declining more rapidly in Italy than in other parts of Europe) finally died out, towards the end of the seventeenth century, in the ignominious negation of taste which led to the extravagance of the Rococo styles ; and the *POST-RENAISSANCE* or *MODERN PERIOD*, which embraces a heterogeneous succession of styles, some indigenous, like the "Georgian" in England, others reproductive of the past, such as the Classic Revival of the eighteenth and the Gothic Revival of the nineteenth century.

It is hoped that a study of these four periods may lead us to an appreciation of the ideals which have inspired in each age such diverse expressions of man's religious and artistic activity, and that an understanding of the work of the past will help us to discern how far the Church of our

own day still inspires and puts to sacred use artistic work of sincere and lofty intention, which alone is worthy of a place in her service.

The first part of the book will deal, in a general way, with the four periods of Christian Art as they are defined above. In the second part we shall examine, more particularly, the decoration of the fabric and furniture of Christian buildings, and the several arts which have been employed for this purpose throughout the Christian era.

CHAPTER II

The Early Christian Period

BEFORE the Emperor Constantine adopted Christianity as the public religion (A.D. 313) the Church had spread over a very wide geographical area. Early Christian antiquities and inscriptions are to be found in every part of the Roman dominions—in the Rhine Valley, in Gaul and Spain, in the British Isles. Syria, Armenia, Persia, and Egypt also show many proofs of Christian influence at a very early date.

But the earliest traditions of Christian art are associated with the catacombs or underground places of burial in various parts of Italy. The stucco walls and roofs are often decorated with frescoes, those of

the second century being scarcely inferior to the best work at Pompeii. The style resembles that of the contemporary Roman art, but it is modified by Christian thought. Scenes from Jewish and Apostolic history, and even from pagan mythology, frequently occur, but always conceived in the spirit of allegory. In this early work there is no trace of portraiture. For instance, though pictures of our LORD are frequent, He is invariably regarded from an ideal point of view as a type of "divine and unaging youth." It was only at the beginning of the fourth century that the "bearded" face, as of the "Man of Sorrows," was first introduced, claiming, no doubt, to be faithful to the human likeness which tradition had made sacred.

A review of this period seems to suggest that early Christian art was not intended to please in an aesthetic way, nor to impress the mind with any beauty beyond that of the *idea* which it was its object to convey. It spoke by means of *

symbols, types, and allegories, the meaning of which was familiar to all who came within its influence.

The spirit which prompted such work was twofold. For the Christian it was an age when persecution was often imminent ; men's lives were joyful in the hope which the new faith engendered, but they had yet to be prepared at any moment to pass through the mortal pains of a cruel death.

Their art could only be symbolic. It was a means of expressing ideas, great indeed with meaning and beauty, but remote from the experience of every day. Such men would naturally avoid the pathos of the real, they would not depict the scenes of death and judgement which were so near to them ; the sad and terrible could find no place in their art ; the mind should only be led to those things which would encourage them in the day of trouble.

At the same time Christian art was

influenced by the general spirit of the age. The Roman world had arrived at a state of intellectual unrest, which, while proving the inadequacy of the old religions, had raised spiritual needs that the pagan philosophy was unable to meet. Men's minds had become imbued with a profound sense of the mystery of the universe. Weary of the obvious and the material they sought relief in Oriental mysticism, and the use of allegory became general. Thus the early Christian art, while it appealed directly to the mind of the initiated, spoke in a language which the rest of the world was learning to understand.

CHAPTER III

The Mediaeval Period

(a) GENERAL

WHEN the Christian Church emerged from its first three centuries of more or less oppressed existence, and the faithful were no longer under the necessity of meeting in the retirement of private houses owned by the more wealthy believers, the erection of public buildings specially set apart for the worship of God was the inevitable outcome of the freedom which was secured to the Christians, for the first time, by the Edict of Constantine.

As the traditions of heathen Rome still dominated their manner of life no less than the style of their art, the Christian

builders naturally adopted, as the most suitable for their purpose, the *Basilica* form of building—"Basilica" being the name given to the market-place and judgement-hall, in which the public business of the community was transacted. The civil building usually consisted of an open oblong space surrounded by rows of columns forming, with the outer walls, a roofed corridor often of two stories. In the wall at one end a semicircular recess, or *Apse*, was formed, containing a raised platform (*Tribuna*) used as the court of justice. For the purpose of Christian use, the central space, or *Nave*, was roofed over; the colonnade at the end towards the apse was omitted; and, later, as the requirements of Divine worship rendered more space necessary, its place was taken by an open transept extending the whole width of the nave and aisles. Lastly, an external colonnade or porch was added at the end opposite to the apse. In many instances, such as *Sant' Ambrogio* at Milan,

access was given to the building through an *atrium* or cloistered court.

This, briefly stated, is the original form of the Christian church.

With the decline of Rome and the transference of the seat of government to Constantinople (A.D. 324) the basilican style, under the influences of Oriental taste and Greek workmanship, acquired an original and striking character. It is seen at its best in the building of *Hagia Sophia* at Constantinople (A.D. 532–537)—the highest expression to which Byzantine art attained. It continued to dominate the architecture of the Eastern Empire till after the fall of Constantinople.

Meanwhile, in the West, artistic development ceased. The fall of the Empire (A.D. 476) was followed by the so-called “dark” ages, when the Celtic and Germanic races were being Christianized and the new civilization began to form.

This period of submerged activity eventually gave birth to the great architecture

of the West, which differed both from the *Early Christian* and from its *Byzantine* or Eastern culmination.

As early as the tenth and eleventh centuries the new style assumed many distinct and beautiful forms, to which the term *Romanesque* is given, and out of the *Romanesque* came the wonderful perfection of what is now universally known as *Gothic* art.

CHAPTER IV

The Mediaeval Period

(b) BYZANTINE

THE newly-acquired freedom which led, at the beginning of the fourth century, to the building of Christian basilicas for public worship, marks a distinct change in decoration from that of the earlier symbolic type. The symbolism and allegory continue. But the opportunity given to the new builders of appropriating bodily antique marbles, shafts, capitals, architraves, and rich linings, introduced a beauty and dignity which became an end in itself.

Constantine endowed churches in Bethlehem and Jerusalem and in his new capital on the Bosphorus, no less than in Rome, with all the splendour that the art of the time could produce.

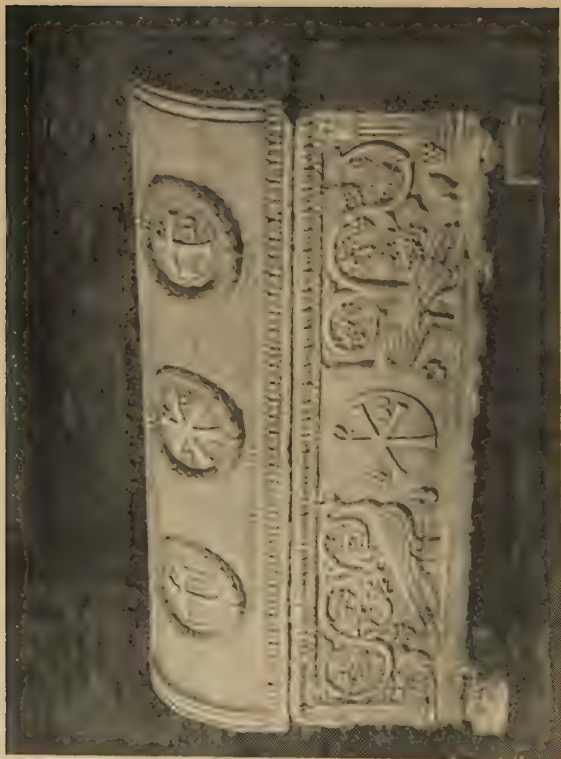


Photo.]

[*Alinari.*
SARCOPHAGUS OF ARCHBISHOP THEODORE IN S. APOLLINARE IN CLASSE
NEAR RAVENNA. 17th century.]

Though the *Byzantine* builders rarely sought external beauty they bestowed upon the interiors of their churches the most lavish incrustations of coloured marble and beautiful mosaic. The primitive charm of the early work, in which simplicity of design is coupled with a wealth of precious material, has seldom been equalled. What splendour of effect and intricacy of design was at length reached can best be judged by the church of *Hagia Sophia*, in the building of which Byzantine art attained its highest expression. Lethaby says of this church : "The columns are of porphyry and verde-antique, the carved capitals of white marble, the vaults were all incrustated with golden mosaics. The walls are sheeted over with thin slabs of precious marbles, as the poet says, '*fresh green as the grass or emerald stone ; or, again, like blue cornflowers in grass, with, here and there, a drift of fallen snow ; there is wealth of porphyry too, powdered with bright stars.*' The iconostasis was of silver and the altar

of gold, under a silver canopy. The ambo, which stood forward, in the middle of the church, was of silver, ivory, and precious marbles. These, of course, have all disappeared, as also has the atrium, which enclosed a space in front of the western doors, with a fountain in the midst. Paulus, describing the opening ceremony after the repairs of 558, writes :
' At last the holy morn had come, and the great door groaned on its hinges, as the sun lit up the glories of the temple. And when the first gleam of rosy light leapt from arch to arch all the princes and people hymned their songs of praise, and it seemed as if the mighty arches were set in heaven. Whoever raises his eyes to the beauteous firmament of the roof scarce dares to gaze on its rounded expanse sprinkled with stars, but turns to the fresh green marble below : seeming, as it were, to see flower-bordered streams, or the deep peace of summer sea broken by the plashing oars of spray-girt ship.'"¹
Such a description brings us more really to

¹ W. R. Lethaby, *Mediaeval Art*. London, 1904.

an understanding of the art of this period than whole chapters of technical treatment.

The Byzantine craftsmen, unlike their early Christian predecessors, did not feel that their work attained its whole object if it were only a medium for expressing, by symbolism and allegory, the aspirations of the Church in whose service they were enlisted. They gave to art its true place in relation to Christian worship. Regarding beauty as the most fitting atmosphere of prayer, they made it their chief aim : for, to produce beauty, is the whole mission of art. But, though the artist's aim be no more than that, yet in doing so he means a great deal, for he feels a great deal ; and that which he feels, and for which he finds an expression, is part of the world's spiritual heritage. "*Art does not teach, it does not preach. Nothing abstract enters into art's domain.*"¹

The art of this period is primitive in

¹ John Addington Symonds, *Essays Speculative and Suggestive*. London, 1907.



Photo.]

[Alinari.

BYZANTINE CAPITAL FROM S. VITALE AT RAVENNA.
(6th century.)

spirit, always naïve, and always strong. For, the craftsmen who produced the gleaming mosaics, and covered their walls and floors with such wealth of choice material, and who sculptured with lovely fancy those miracles of white marble, alabaster, and ivory, were men who accepted the limitations of their various crafts : since they were content to express themselves with simple grandeur, the realistic tendencies of a later age never vitiated the refinement of their work.

CHAPTER V

The Mediaeval Period

(c) ROMANESQUE

WE have seen that the first great style of the Middle Ages grew up in the Eastern capital, and even took its name from Byzantium, while the development of the basilica, as the adopted form of Christian building, had been temporarily arrested in the West by the fall of Rome.

Nevertheless, Roman monuments and remains, spread abroad throughout the whole of Europe, were at once an object-lesson and an incentive to the Western builders. Moreover, the influence of Byzantine art soon spread westwards, owing to the migration of artists imbued with an understanding of the Eastern style;



THE 'PUERTA DE LA GLORIA' OF S. IAGO AT COMPOSTELA.
(11th century.)

and to the dissemination of manuscripts, ivories, and enamels of Byzantine workmanship. Under these two influences—Classic and Byzantine—arose the new Western architecture, which, by about the tenth century, when the Christian Church had spread over wellnigh every part of Europe, had begun to achieve great and worthy results. To this first period, the precursor of the “Gothic” ages, the generic term *Romanesque* is given. Its art is pre-eminently ecclesiastical. The Church had already become the centre from which the culture and refinement of the time emanated, and it was the needs of her life and discipline which gave form to the builder’s art.

Such were the general conditions under which the new Western art arose. It was destined to fill a much wider place in the world than anything we have as yet had to deal with.

Byzantine and early Christian art, alike, had been local or more particular expres-



Photo.]

CAPITAL FROM CLOISTERS AT MOISSAC. (Early 12th century.)

[Giraudon.]

sions, whereas the Romanesque was "catholic," in that its sphere included the whole of the then catholic world. Just as the various Latin languages were national transformations of their common original, so also did the styles of building (called by a true analogy "Romanesque," for they evolved out of the forms of ancient Rome) become modified by the needs and uses of the different nations.

Without losing sight of our chief object—that of suggesting the underlying spirit which prompted the art of each period as a whole—it will be necessary for us briefly to examine some of the various forms of decorative work which in different parts of Europe took to themselves a more national or local colour.

IN ITALY

The Romanesque was more strongly influenced by Byzantine art in Italy than in Western Europe. Rome had

early regained something of its ancient prestige. Ravenna and Venice had become centres of culture and civilization, and were continually engaged in commerce with the East. The arts, therefore, were not likely to lack either inspiration or the means of advancing, but the advance was not the same in every part of the country. There was a wide variety of styles, which, for our purpose, may be broadly grouped under three headings — *the ITALO-BYZANTINE, the TUSCAN-ROMAN-ESQUE, and the LOMBARD.*

(a) The *Italo-Byzantine* style is roughly the general style throughout Italy, from the sixth to the eleventh centuries, wherever the Byzantine influence was most strongly felt. Perhaps it is best exemplified in the cathedral at *Torcello*. So much, however, has been written by Ruskin and others about this wonderful church, and also about *S. Mark's* at Venice, which was built a few years later, that we shall do no more than name these, together with

the *Baptistery* and *San Miniato* at Florence, as typical, in widely differing ways, of the Italo-Byzantine work.

(*b*) The *Tuscan-Romanesque* style was more elegant, but not so vigorous as the other two. The churches were basilican in plan, and retained the old timber roofs—either open or ceiled in. Generally speaking the decorative element prevailed over the constructive in the designs of the Tuscan-Romanesque. The *Duomo at Pisa* is the finest example of the style. The exterior strikes one as singularly satisfying. The building rests upon the level turf, like some lovely casket—a perfect harmony of form and colour. The quality of its decoration is wonderfully varied. Here, a simple wall of mellowed white, black, and coloured marble, is just relieved by a shallow arcading written lightly across its surface: there, slender columns, carrying superimposed tiers of arches, throw a perfect shower of broken shadows behind them.

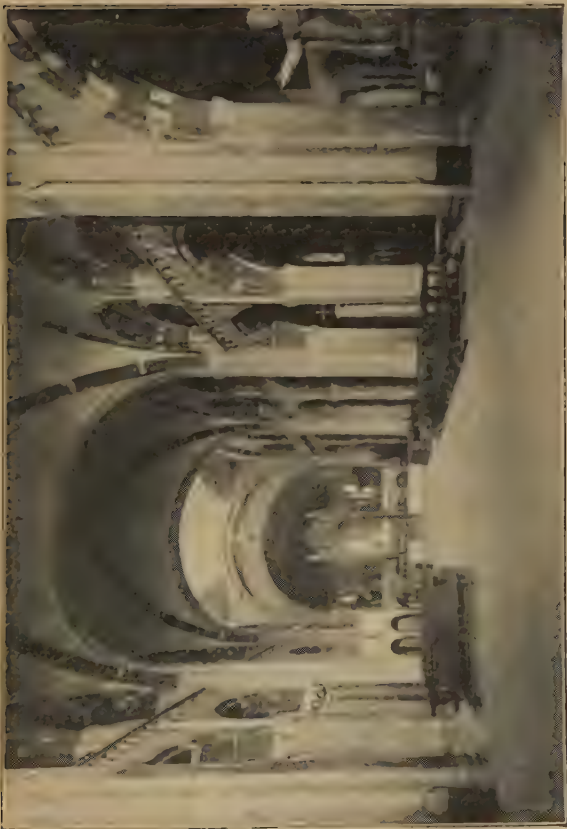


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(Longi

INTERIOR OF S. AMBROGIO AT MILAN. (Lombard Style. 12th century.)

This was a style calculated to please the eye, by subtle quality of colour and the most exquisite simplicity of form.

(c) The *Lombard Style*. In the churches of this class we have again the basilican form, but, as they generally have heavy stone vaultings, instead of the old timbered roof, the plan was necessarily modified to the exigencies of vault construction. As a result, the whole aspect of the building differed from that of the other basilican styles. The lightness and open spaciousness disappeared, and a massive dignity—sombre and severe—took its place. *Santi' Ambrogio*, at Milan, is typical. This is one of the most beautiful churches in Italy. Looking at the simple and massive piers, already foreshadowing the clustered form of the Gothic, we feel how transitional the style is ; but the magnificent *ciborium*, or altar-canopy, resting on porphyry columns, with its gilded reliefs on a clear blue ground, and the gleaming mosaics in the apse behind, remind us that we are



[Alinari.]
LION PORTAL FROM BORGO SAN DONNINO. (Lombard Style. 12th century.)

still at an age which was primitive in its decoration and simple in its taste.

The treatment of the Lombard exteriors was usually pleasing and effective. Porches, or rather gables, projecting from the surface of the wall, and supported by slender columns resting upon the backs of lions or monsters, made the doorways interesting features in façades, which otherwise would have been plain, or merely broken into light and shade by small galleries and shallow buttress-like pilasters.

IN WESTERN EUROPE

The basilican style of building, which had served so well the needs of the Church in Italy, proved itself inadequate to the more general requirements of the rest of Europe. Moreover, the great activity in building amongst the monastic orders (which represented what there was of culture and stability amid the prevailing disorder), an activity carried on by men

having little technical knowledge, largely dependent upon their own resources, and, in many cases, quite remote from the Classic and Byzantine models, eventually led to the working out of problems in construction and design which were of an entirely new order.

The Romanesque architects of Western Europe used vaulted roofs, massive walls, heavy and richly-carved mouldings, and round arches—often stepped or recessed to lighten their appearance ; the period, owing to this last feature, has sometimes been known as “the round-arched Gothic.” These distinctive features are common to the whole of French, German, English, and Spanish Romanesque architecture.

The decoration mainly consisted in strong and effective carving. Capitals of the simple cushion type, so common in our English Norman work, are typical of the big simplicity of the main constructive forms, which always took precedence over mere decoration. The walls being very

thick, windows and doors were widely splayed, and rich carvings of zigzags, billets, grotesques, and figure-work filled the deeply-recessed arches. Apart from such decoration, the exteriors were usually very plain.

We may take the Church of *S. Front*, at Perigueux (1047), or the portal of that at *S. Gilles* (12th century), as representative of the Romanesque in France ; the *Church of the Apostles* (1160-1199), at Cologne, in Germany ; most of our own Norman work in England, such as at *Winchester*, *Durham*, or *Gloucester* ; and the Church of *Sant Iago*, at Compostella (1078), in Spain. The beautiful doorway, known as the "*Puerta de la Gloria*," of this church, is, perhaps, the finest example of Romanesque decorative sculpture in Europe.¹

"Art," it has been said, "is born of the utilities of life." If so, we should expect to find art at its best in an architecture

¹ An excellent cast of the "*Puerta de la Gloria*" may be seen at South Kensington.



Photo.]

[Neurdein.

SAINT GILLES. (12th century.)

which owed its origin to the needs of monastic life and the rugged discipline of the Church in a semi-barbarous age. In one sense, at any rate, the Romanesque fulfils this expectation. Undoubtedly it was primitive, and often lacking in skill and technical perfection, for the artists of this period were struggling with new problems of construction and decoration, and their lack of experience often led to clumsy and faulty work. But it should never be forgotten that "in art everything depends upon the *taste* of the craftsman. To him, taste is more vital than ability and industry. Should the cunning worker, though master of the technical portion of his art, be lacking in taste, he is a failure as an artist."¹ The taste of the Romanesque craftsmen was rarely at fault. In this respect they were unsurpassed even by the succeeding generation of artists, in whose hands the Gothic reached its zenith of perfection and refinement.

¹ Arthur Samuel, *Piranesi*. London, 1910.

CHAPTER VI

The Mediaeval Period

(d) GOTHIC

WE have come at last to the full emergence of the *Gothic* style. It is but a step from the Romanesque to the Gothic, but it is a step which leads us to the highest expression, in art, of the fundamental mysticism which the Middle Ages contributed to the Christian Church. The "reverie of the Middle Age, with its spiritual ambitions and imaginative love," the whole spirit of *Romance*, here finds expression in the elusive and intangible charm of an architecture which we revere, but whose spirit is beyond all analysis. We must remember that, at the time when the

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Gothic developed, French thought and the French tongue were pre-eminent in Western Europe. French tales of chivalry were the delight of every court; and it was from France that the Romance spirit emanated.

It showed itself in many ways, this spirit of the Mediaeval Age. Romance *art* is but one expression. The chivalry of life, the romance of literature, the establishment of the Universities, the organization of guilds—all these were channels through which it made itself felt.

It was the Romanesque architecture of Northern France that gave birth to the beautiful flower of the Gothic; and in no other country was it quite at its best. It is most nearly faultless, outside the "Isle de France," on the Rhine, and in Northern Spain, where French master-masons seem to have worked.

In England it attained to great beauty, but in a smaller and less perfectly devel-

oped way. The German and Austrian forms are more irregular and more barbaric. Italy never made the style her own.

The great builders of this period, unlike those of the Romanesque, never inserted anything for the sake of making beautiful an otherwise unsatisfying structure; the constructive members of their buildings became, in themselves, decorative features. Though they beautified their walls with the subdued richness of frescoes, and filled great windows with the blazing splendour of coloured glass, they added no *material* like the Romanesque veneers of marble, which might not serve a useful purpose.

The beauty of a Gothic building *is* the building.

There are three periods of Gothic architecture, the *EARLY PERIOD*, the *DECORATED* or *MIDDLE PERIOD*, and the *FLAMBOYANT* or, as we know it in England, the *PERPENDICULAR*.

The *Early* period is characterized by great simplicity of design and vigour of treatment. The *Middle* period was richer and more perfect technically. In the *Flamboyant* there is often energy without strength ; technical finish is carried to a fault ; unity is lost in over-elaboration of decorative detail ; dignity is sacrificed to the vulgarities of naturalism and display, inevitable in a declining art.

The evolution of Gothic architecture, from its inception about A.D. 1150, to its zenith and subsequent decline at the end of the fourteenth century, was essentially organic.

The tendency throughout was to make every part of the building thinner, lighter, and more attenuated. The constructive principles evolved were bound to be scientific. As in all great art, there was no waste nor excess ; each part had its individual purpose, and the removal of any one part was dangerous to the whole. The introduction of the pointed arch was

accompanied by a complete change in the system of support. Buttresses which hitherto had only been pilasters of slight projection now became heavy piers, rising above the aisle-roof, to support, by means of flying members, the loftier portions of the nave. So entirely did the staying power of the building become resident in the system of buttressing that, structurally, a Gothic edifice is little more than a skeleton. From the foundations of the outermost buttresses, and the bases of its clustered piers, right up to the topmost keystones of the vaulting, the whole fabric is one intricate framework of ascending, converging, and interlacing lines of slender masonry. Lateral walls, since they were no longer needed to support a heavy superstructure, practically disappeared, until the area of the glass in the great windows exceeded the area of mural stonework.

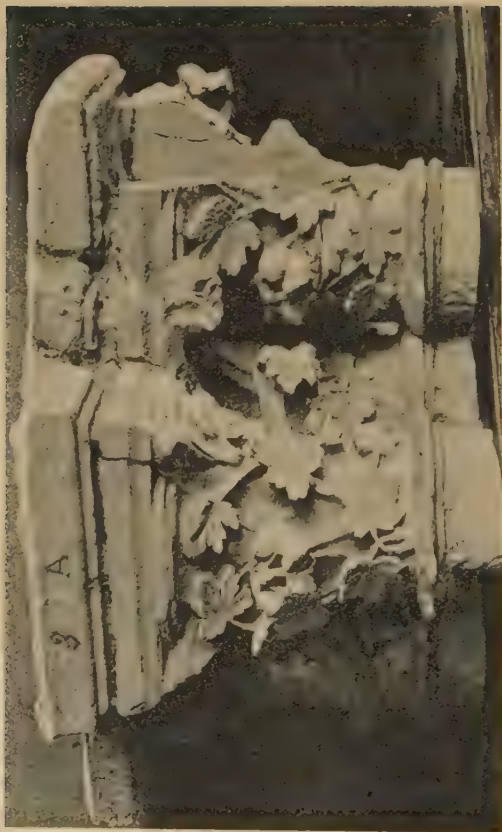
Changes in the structure opened up new fields for decorative fancy. The



CHARTRES CATHEDRAL FROM SOUTH-EAST. (13th century.)

buttresses, which needed weight to resist the thrust or side-pressure of the vaults, were crowned with heavy pinnacles. These were fashioned with rich carvings of crockets and finials, and often took the form of tabernacles for figures of angels or saints. The flying-buttresses, on the other hand, whose function was to transmit, not to sustain, weight, were lightened as much as possible by pierced decoration. Since the rain-water, for which their upper surfaces provided conduits, from the roof of the nave to the leads below, needed to be projected beyond the foundations, gargoyles were added. These offered opportunities, which the Gothic craftsman was never slow to seize, for the sculpture of fantastic animals and grotesques.

The most far-reaching change of all was the limitation of wall-space, which led to the disappearance of mural painting and the substitution of painted glass. This wonderful art takes precedence over every other form of decoration, and is incom-



GOTHIC CAPITAL FROM THE SOUTH PORCH OF CHAKRES CATHEDRAL. (13th century.)

parably the most beautiful means of expression that the mediaeval builders evolved.

For they were not only builders ; they were master craftsmen. In the vitality of their sculpture, the emotion and grouping of figures, the carving of capitals, the ornamentation of mouldings, in the mysterious charm of their glass—in every branch of the decorative arts — great fertility of imagination is wedded to the most perfect refinement of taste. Such natural forms as were used were directly inspired by nature, but simplified and conventionalized with rare knowledge and restraint. At the same time, they were so essentially one with the structural members that they seemed to grow out of the very material in which they were fashioned.

It has been well said by Mr. Lethaby that the general characteristics of the Gothic were developed by free and energetic experiment. “It was organic,

daring, reasonable, and gay. The measure of life was the measure of the Gothic."

Only when the sense of organic life and structural unity was destroyed by the overlaying of every part with a purposeless profusion of ornament, did men's thoughts turn again, in weariness and revulsion, to the more formal grandeur of the Classic models.

CHAPTER VII

The Renaissance

(a) IN ITALY

LONG before the Gothic had worked itself out in the North and West, Italy began to show signs of the profound intellectual movement known as the *Renaissance*. Far back in the Middle Ages may be traced the roots of this universal expansion of thought, but it first became manifest in Italy simply because there, first, arose the conditions necessary to its evolution. "The essence of this far-reaching movement was the protest of the individual reason against the trammels of external and arbitrary authority." This protest was the foundation on which our

modern civilization is based. It was a reaction against the scholasticism and ecclesiastical domination of the Middle Ages, and it was most marked by the tremendous enthusiasm with which the neglected treasures of classic literature were sought after and studied. To Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio must be attributed much of the impetus which brought about the general revival of learning. But its first definite expression was made by the Humanists of the fourteenth century, in asserting the moral and intellectual rights of the individual. The delight in beauty and pleasure for their own sakes, the dawning understanding of the meaning of freedom, the joy of living—these things, as a direct result of the bursting asunder of the mediaeval bonds, found expression in art and literature, amid an unprecedented advance in culture and refinement.

Gothic art had never been more than a borrowed manner in Italy ; Classic art,



Photo.]

[Alinari.

STA. MARIA DEI MIRACOLI, VENICE. (Late 15th century.)

on the other hand, had never entirely lost its influence on Italian taste. So when the antique first fully regained its sway over Italian minds, they were inclined to appropriate with thoughtless enthusiasm everything, good or bad, which had the glamour of the ancient world upon it. But as they advanced in understanding and discrimination, they only incorporated in their work what was of real value in the Classic. This union of the thought of two ages gave to their renascent art great charm and originality of idea.

But the art of the Renaissance, unlike that of the Romanesque and Gothic periods, was not an ecclesiastical art. As the Church lost its hold upon the thought of the new age by that conservative antagonism which public bodies have always shown in great transitional periods, the new art entered increasingly into the service of private luxury and municipal display. The personal element

in design asserted itself as it had never done before. The history of art became the history of individual artists. The work was always done for its own sake, whether it took the form of a consecrated vessel or a marriage casket.

The stirring of the Renaissance can be located with the same definiteness as the emergence of the Gothic. It was the artists of Florence, or, at any rate, of Tuscany, who first showed the new spirit, and formed the earliest of the Italian "schools." The Pisan sculptors, as early as the thirteenth century, had had recourse to the antique for inspiration. The fourteenth century had seen the revival of painting. Giotto had covered the walls of many a sacred building with the flower of his art. The painters of Italy, from first to last, had produced on walls and ceilings the choicest work that their art has ever put forth.

The great artists of the Renaissance addressed themselves to the whole wide

field of decoration. They were painters, sculptors, and goldsmiths, knowing no comparison between the arts, and carrying each branch to the same mighty perfection. The whole intellectual atmosphere in which they worked was particularly favourable to creative effort; for, in spite of the unceasing internecine strife among the rival states, communes, and republics of Italy, the whole community was united in at least this one thing, that whatever artistic work was produced was received with magnificent appreciation by every class of the community. The land was permeated with a love of beauty in art, which, since the days of Athenian splendour, had never been matched.

Such a state of things is, perhaps, difficult to understand in an age like our own, when works of art are popularly appreciated only by the extent of their technical finish, the realism with which they are conceived, or the price which they can command.



Pl. II.

[*Alinari.*
15TH CENTURY INTARSIA WORK IN WOOD, IN STA. CROCE, FIRENCE.
(Giov. di Michele.)

It cannot be too clearly stated that the majority of the great Renaissance artists were men who painted and sculptured religious subjects, or made vessels for the most sacred uses of the Church with no *religious* enthusiasm. It was an age of inspired paganism. Doubtless there were exceptions. The saintly Angelico, working at his inexpressibly sweet frescoes, must have prayed that they might be the means of bringing the teaching of the Church to the hearts of his fellow men : but, if his pictures did this—and who shall say they did not ?—it was only because they expressed *in terms of beauty* his own spiritual rapture. Ruskin, speaking of one of Titian's pictures of the Madonna, says : " It is a noble picture because Titian believed in the Madonna, but *he did not paint it to make any one else believe in her.* He painted it because he enjoyed rich masses of red and blue, and faces flushed with sunlight." He says in another place : " No Venetian



[Anderson.]
ARCHIVOLT OF A WINDOW FROM THE BORGIA APARTMENTS IN THE VATICAN.
(Pomponetti.)

painter ever worked *with any other aim beyond delighting the eye.*" This might have been said of all Renaissance art.

It must also be remembered that the popes and princes of the Church, whose patronage was the means of introducing into her service the whole wealth of Renaissance art, were actuated far more by a desire to glorify themselves, the arts, and their native towns, than to enhance the glory of God. Indeed, this could hardly be otherwise. It was an age when men had temporarily lost touch with the fundamental spirit of Christianity, and were revelling, like children, in a new and unaccustomed freedom.

The Renaissance reached its height in Italy by about the end of the sixteenth century. It is impossible, of course, to enumerate the great tale of painters, sculptors, and craftsmen who contributed their genius to designing and executing the altars, screens, mural monuments, pulpits, and ciboria which



Photo.]

[Alinari. DIVULG. FROM THE MUSEE DE BULGARY, 1861. VATICAN. (Raffael.)

are the delight of every traveller in Italy. But the mere mention of such names as Brunelleschi, Bramante, Mino da Fiesole, or the Della Robbias, in the earlier period ; or of Pinturicchio, Sassovino, Perruzzi, and Michelangelo, calls up in the minds of most of us ideas of work, the extreme beauty of which is beyond all criticism.

During the seventeenth century, when the new spirit had become worked out, the churches were covered with decoration marked by poverty of invention, vulgar display, and a total disregard of propriety and restraint. Indeed, much of the finest work of the former century was irretrievably spoiled by the extravagancies and shams which became general in the prevailing baseness of taste under the Rococo style.

We shall not refer again to Italian decoration in this part of our book. It is enough to state here that such petty revivals of the purer Classic as occurred



14000

MEETING OF S. FRANCIS AND S. DOMINIC. TERRA COTTA RELIEF UNDER THE
LOGGIA DI SAN PAOLO AT FIRENCE. (Andrea Della Robbia.)

in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were pompous and artificial, and produced little or no decorative work that is of any value.

CHAPTER VIII

The Renaissance

(b) IN WESTERN EUROPE

AS France had given the spirit of "romance," so Italy gave her "new-born culture" to Western Europe. Neither in France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, nor in our own country, was the Renaissance style a natural growth. It exercised a far-reaching influence over the art of each country, but became modified, in each, by the national character and the social conditions of the time.

IN FRANCE

The vitality which the Gothic retained in France, even in its decline, was long a

barrier to the introduction of the new forms. About the close of the fifteenth century, however, Italian artists began to frequent the French court. These seem to have first introduced the Classic element into the existing French art. Their influence upon architecture was slight, resulting only in a greater wealth of decorative ideas. Such churches as *S. Etienne du Mont* and *S. Eustache*, in Paris, are good examples of buildings in which the plan and construction are still Gothic, while the decorative details belong to the new style. The chapel of the Sorbonne may be cited, together with that at Versailles, as representative of the advanced and more pedantic work. But the best examples of the French Renaissance architecture are not to be found in church building, they must be sought in palaces and châteaux, with which we are not concerned. The Church of *S. Sulpice*, in Paris, belongs to the decline. It is, however, mainly noted for its freedom

from the pompous extravagance and caprice which commonly debase the later work. The façade is a good example of severe and classic dignity.

IN GERMANY AND HOLLAND

The Reformation put a stop for some time to the building of churches in Germany and Holland, and the Renaissance style was mainly used in domestic and secular architecture. It constantly shows a capriciousness, which is very charming, but rarely achieves the sober and monumental dignity of the Italian work.

IN BELGIUM

Belgium long continued in its churches the late Gothic style of florid decoration, and was slow to accept the principles of the Renaissance, which produced no art that is worthy of mention.



DETAIL FROM 17TH CENTURY DUTCH WOODEN SCREEN.

(State Kabinet, Amsterdam.)

IN SPAIN

In Spain the new style received the name *Plateresque* (from *platero*, "silver-smith"), because it was in jewellery and silverwork that the Renaissance first became general. Its architectural ornament was characterized by minutely detailed and sumptuous surface decoration spreading over broad areas. Delicately chiselled arabesques with florid escutcheons were made to fill every available space. In the earlier work, notwithstanding the general exuberance of the style, there was great refinement and charm. All dignity and restraint, however, were sacrificed at a later period to an execrable profusion of misplaced and vulgar detail.

IN ENGLAND

The Renaissance in England was far more fruitful, and can show some extremely beautiful work.

The period of Gothic decline in this country had been marked by somewhat pleasing though degenerate forms known as the Tudor style, which came into use under Henry VII and Henry VIII.

With the Reformation church building ceased, thus marking a distinct gap between the last phase of the Gothic and the advent of the Renaissance in architecture.

The Elizabethan age showed the Renaissance spirit in a splendid gaiety of life, in the ardour for travel and exploration, and, above all, in the realm of literary production, but its influence upon architecture and upon the plastic arts was less immediate and less far-reaching in its results. Yet under Elizabeth Italian and Dutch workmen were brought to England, who introduced the Renaissance forms in a quantity of domestic architecture, and in a few ecclesiastical works of minor importance. Chief among the decorative means employed were the use of the Classic orders in the embellishment

of doors, windows, chimneys, and fireplaces. Pilasters, balustrades, and escutcheons in stone and brick were used together with finely-modelled plaster-work in low relief, in giving greater richness and beauty to the buildings of the period.

The Italians who worked in England left behind them exquisite examples of their art. The tomb of Henry VII in *Westminster Abbey*, Bishop West's chapel in *Ely Cathedral*, the Layer Marney tombs in Essex—these did not constitute the English Renaissance, they were *purely* Italian. Such work introduced the new forms and did much to influence the English taste, but it remained for Inigo Jones, and his great successor Sir Christopher Wren, to unite the Classic forms and the English spirit in one homogeneous style. To most of us the former is little more than a name, but Wren left upon his native country, more especially in London, the stamp of individual genius, in a manner in which no single artist at



Photo.]

[*Cyril Ellis.*

ROOF OF LORD MAYOR'S VESTRY, IN S. PAUL'S
CATHEDRAL. (Wren.)

any other time has had the opportunity of doing.

The fire of London in 1666 had reduced the great Gothic Cathedral of S. Paul, already in a somewhat dangerous state, to complete ruin. And at a time when the city and most of its churches were lying in ashes, we cannot but remember with admiration the magnificent resolve of the commissioners under Sancroft, to "frame a design handsome and noble . . . and to take it for granted that money will be had to accomplish it."

This was Wren's great opportunity. In the new S. Paul's he achieved a combination of Classic and Italian forms, welding them into a complete whole by the unifying influence of a master-mind. It is the unity of design in decorative detail as well as general construction which gives to the building its primary beauty. Such details as the stone-carving in the roof of the Lord Mayor's vestry, or over the Dean's doorway, or the



Photo.]

[*Cyril Ellis*

BASE OF DEAN'S STAIRCASE IN S. PAUL'S. (Wren.)

magnificent work in iron and stone on the staircase in the south-west tower, are decorative features of great intrinsic charm : but their chief value consists in contributing to the unity and beauty of the whole conception. The woodwork of the stalls shows the great mastery of detail which Wren invariably displayed, and is also representative of the technical skill of Grinling Gibbons.

S. Paul's Cathedral is incomparably the finest production in England of the ecclesiastical art of the Renaissance. It is, therefore, unnecessary to refer to other work by Sir Christopher Wren : and his influence upon subsequent architecture will be dealt with in the chapter on the "Post-Renaissance."

Of the magnificent work of Alfred Stevens, the labours of Sir William Richmond, and the additions of Mr. Bodley, we shall also have to speak in another place.

The Renaissance in England was lack-

ing in the splendour and wealth of the South because it was expressive of a very different spirit. And, though it was admirably suited to the material and comfortable religion of a self-complacent century, it can but seem unsatisfying to an age in which the Church has regained something of its meaning for us as a catholic and mystical communion.

CHAPTER IX

The Post-Renaissance or Modern Period in England

THE decline of the Renaissance into the Rococo styles of the seventeenth century throughout the south of Europe can only be described as a decadent and grotesque old age.

In England there have been revivals and counter-revivals of the Classic, as well as a serious attempt to revive the Gothic spirit.

Since from this period of spasmodic activity no original style has yet emerged, and all the best work of modern architecture has been conceived in the spirit of one or other of the great styles of the past, we must be content to accept the

term *Post-Renaissance*, until such time as our modern architecture shall find expression in original forms meriting a more distinctive title.

The first revival took place early in the eighteenth century, when a number of fine churches were erected, such as *S. George's, Bloomsbury*, by Hawkesmoor, or *S. Martin's-in-the-Fields* (1726), by James Gibbs, in which the influence of Sir Christopher Wren is strongly marked. They were dignified and possessed of great charm, owing to the excellence of proportion and straightforward simplicity of their design, but were lacking in a spontaneous creative spirit. This lack of originality led, at the end of the century, to a deliberate revival of pure Greek forms, carefully measured, and copied with the utmost exactitude. Not only the general structure, but the ornamental detail, was adopted with as little deviation as possible from the original models. *S. Pancras' Church*, by Thompson, for instance, is little more than a Greek

temple slightly altered in plan, carefully reproduced in detail, crowned with a Wren-like belfry, and unsuited alike to the English climate and the Christian ideals.

Before the middle of the nineteenth century there began the *Gothic* revival, which was dominated by the same archaeological desire to revive the national Gothic architecture with the greatest possible correctness. This movement, like the Classic revival which preceded it, left much to be desired, but such a beautiful church as *S. Augustine's* (Roman Catholic) Church at Ramsgate, by Pugin, was a welcome reaction from the general degradation and meanness of the English ecclesiastical architecture of the time. Towards the end of the century the desire for archaeological correctness gave place to a more rational attempt to adapt the Gothic style to modern taste and requirements. Many beautiful churches have been built upon this principle, and much able decora-



Plan 15.

Wood 2516.

S. AGNES', KENNINGTON.

tive work, not only in the fabric, but also in the furniture and vessels of the Church, has resulted from it. Such churches as *S. Augustine's, Kilburn*, and *S. John's, Red Lion Square*, both by Pearson; *Eccleston Church*, by the late Mr. Bodley; *S. Agnes's, Kennington*; or *S. Giles's Church*, near Salisbury, by Mr. Comper, are admirably suited throughout to the revived Catholic worship.

Whilst recognizing the superiority of this later work we should not forget that it is to the earlier and more pedantic age that we owe the revival of archaeological study, which has led us, not only to build more worthily ourselves, but to appreciate for their own sakes, and hold sacred, the treasures of bygone ages. In the past we have often destroyed, without any compunction, the choicest Mediaeval and Renaissance work, and imposed the vulgar conceptions of the hour upon buildings of an earlier age.

In the twentieth century we are learning not to destroy, even when we restore.



Choir

Transept

S. GILES' BY SALISBURY.

But it is one thing to restore, another to create. There are plenty of architects and antiquarians who can appreciate the beauty of such remains as have been handed down to us, and restore them with unerring skill; but few are capable of producing work worthy to stand beside that of the past. Too often we find churches in which a beautiful fabric is spoiled by furniture and decoration in wood, iron, stone, and glass, which are painful and often ludicrous in their inadequacy.

Indeed it is the exception rather than the rule for sincere work of any real artistic merit to find its way into a modern church.

This state of affairs can be accounted for in three ways.

1. *Architecture has practically ceased to rank as an art.* It has almost become identified with the science of building. Yet in reality the two differ as widely as music and mathematics. This confusion

of the artistic and scientific aspects of his profession has led the ordinary modern architect to lay more stress upon planning and construction than upon the equally important qualities which place architecture only second to music among the arts. It was not of a *science of construction*, but of a *vehicle of artistic expression*, that Goethe was thinking when he said that it is "music petrified."

2. *Design has generally become divorced from craft.* In nearly every modern craft one man designs and another executes. This method is fatal to the production of vital work. For the only man who can conceive a really beautiful design is the man who is constantly expressing himself *in the material* for which he designs. More than this, a true artist rarely brings any idea to complete expression without modifying and transforming his original conception *during the process of production*. Consequently, unless the designer is himself the producer, or at least can impart

his idea to a sympathetic craftsman, *leaving him a more or less free hand in determining the result*, the issue is bound to be lacking in the personal expression which is inherent in every true work of art.

3. *The clergy and churchwardens, who are responsible, rarely possess sufficient artistic knowledge to distinguish what is essentially beautiful from the merely commonplace.* This is natural, but the result is often disastrous. A wealthy parishioner, perhaps, will, with the worthiest intentions, offer to take the responsibility, financial and artistic, upon himself—an offer equally difficult to refuse and dangerous to accept, as one historical instance has shown. Or the work is entrusted to commercial enterprise—everything, from a jewelled chalice to the latest cut in clerical tailoring, being immediately obtainable. This state of things speaks for itself.

If, therefore, our architects would be artists before they are architects, if our designers would be craftsmen before they

design, and if the clergy would be advised to buy what is good in design and workmanship rather than the more showy commercial productions, which for the same price must necessarily be lacking in these qualities—then our churches would not contain so much that is unworthy its place and sacred use.

But signs are not lacking that the future will differ from the past in these matters.

The Oxford Movement has had incalculable effect upon English thought. The revival of dignified Christian worship in the English Church is only one of its more obvious results. The movement was the outcome of "the dominant historical spirit of the nineteenth century—the unconquerable desire, even in those who think themselves most busy with the present, to know first of all what the past has said and done, if only under the pretext of applying the discovery to their own time."¹

¹ George Saintsbury, *A Short History of English Literature*. London, 1907.

It was, in fact, the beginning of the analytical spirit of modern thought, which is not content merely with results, but must needs discover the causes which underlie the great achievements of the past.

A scientific study of history and archaeology, when carried on by the individual mind, is, as a rule, detrimental to artistic creation. When the same studies become the thinking basis of the collective mind, the result upon individuals is usually stimulating to creative energy.

The present age is not without great vitality. Nor is there any reason why really good work should not be produced in England to-day. There is an increasing number of men who are so far artists that, given sufficient time, they will do the best work in their power, asking no more than the means to live ; because *in the doing the work well*, not *in the payment*, do they find the joy that satisfies.

To work well is to live well. This is

the meaning of life, and this brings Art very near to Religion, since each, in its own way, is "a spontaneous outpouring, in whatever the hand finds to do, of a spiritual delight in life."

PART II



CHAPTER X

The Decoration of the Fabric

PAINTING, MOSAICS, AND FRESCOES

THE history of mural decoration in the Church covers nearly the whole period of Christian worship, from the age of the catacombs to the present day. It embraced the work of almost every painter or sculptor of repute until the spirit of the modern world turned men's thoughts into fresh channels, exalting new ideals and a wider mental horizon.

Wall-painting was common in the catacombs and in the earliest Christian basilicas of the time of Constantine.

The use of mosaics also dates from the beginning of the fourth century. The

earliest known to exist are in *S. Paolo fuori*, and *SS. Cosma e Damiano*, at Rome. *S. Vitale* and *S. Apollinare Nuovo*, at Ravenna, and *Hagia Sophia*, at Constantinople, contain work of the sixth century. The work of the seventh century is represented in *S. Apollinare-in-Classe*, near Ravenna.

The art of Ravenna of the sixth (see Plate 33) and seventh centuries is specially interesting, because it shows the connection between the Roman and Byzantine forms, and also links them up with the later work of *S. Ambrogio* at Milan, and *S. Mark's* at Venice.

In the North, in districts further removed from the Eastern influence and less readily supplied with costly materials, mosaic work was rare, the common form of decoration being wall-painting, executed on dry plaster in the manner of the ancients. This style of painting should not be confused with *fresco*. The latter, in which colour was laid upon wet plaster,



Photo.]

[Alinari

MOAICS IN THE BAPTISTERY OF S. MARK'S, VENICE.
(12th century.)

so as to become permanently incorporated with it in the process of drying, did not come into general use until the fourteenth century, whereas wall-painting reached its golden age in the Romanesque epoch.

Many cathedrals and churches in England show remains of painting, but little that has not been spoiled by the application of whitewash, or more irretrievably ruined by "restoration."

It is interesting to note how soon the Christian Church, even in these distant islands, adopted the practice of colouring its buildings. The custom is common to every age and race, as Egyptian, Greek, and Roman work attest. It would seem, indeed, a universal instinct to apply colour, not only to plane surfaces, but often to the most highly finished sculpture.

In Great Britain decorative colour is frequent among Roman remains. But, after the withdrawal of the Roman influence, painting seems to have fallen, for a long time, into disuse. It reappears,

however, in the seventh century. Benedict Biscop is stated to have decorated the monastery at Wearmouth with various paintings, which he brought with him from France in A.D. 678; and a little earlier, in A.D. 674, Wilfrid, Bishop of York, had ordered parts of his church to be decorated with colour. From this time onwards, until the Reformation, it was the general custom to beautify churches both with paintings and hangings. In the ninth century a canon was issued, requiring every bishop, before consecrating a church, to see that there was a painting of the patron saint, either over the altar or in some convenient place upon the wall.

During the Gothic ages, in Western Europe, wall-space, as we have already seen, was reduced to a minimum by structural changes in the architecture, so that the great windows of painted glass which filled the spaces between the buttresses took the place of painting, and



Photo.]

[*Alinari.*

DECEASED FIGURE FROM THE BOOK OF THE SISTINE
CHAPEL. A.D. 1508-1512 (Michelangelo.)

presented in another form the desired decorative qualities.

In Italy, where the Gothic never became naturalized, painting and fresco remained the chief means of decoration. From Giotto and Cimabue to Michelangelo the progress of the art was one of unrivalled splendour ; and the Renaissance in Italy marked the highest point to which it ever attained. A great deal might be said about the work of the Italian painters, as well as of the German and Flemish masters, who have laboured in the service of the Church ; but the subject is far too wide to be treated in a general survey of the decorative arts.

In the present day few paintings are executed upon the walls of churches ; and these, either through poverty of conception on the part of the particular artist, or because of the faulty conditions under which modern decorative work is produced, are not even representative of the best contemporary painting.

A sincere attempt has recently been made to revive the use of mosaic. In *S. Paul's Cathedral* the work has been carried out with the utmost care ; but most of the designs, although harmless and inoffensive to the eye, can hardly be considered worthy of the building they are intended to decorate. It is difficult, when one remembers the grandeur and dignity of design and glowing colour of the early mosaics, not to experience a feeling of disappointment in the presence of this work. It moves one to no enthusiasm ; it has none of the vigour and spontaneity which is to be found in all great works of art. The earlier designs, however, for the prophets and evangelists in the spandrels beneath the whispering gallery are lofty in conception, and carried out with breadth and dignity.

Some of the recent mosaic work in the Roman Catholic Cathedral at Westminster is far better than the later work at S. Paul's.

But it is hardly likely that this type of decoration will become general in England. It is an art which has special beauties and special limitations ; even if there were in this country a school of artists who found in it a natural and spontaneous mode of expression, our climate could never do justice to the peculiar qualities of the medium.

Painting is far better suited to a northern atmosphere ; but the best work of our day, as we have already noticed, is not to be found in the churches, and only rarely on the walls of other public buildings. Indeed, modern painting seems to have taken a wrong direction. The large "easel" picture is no longer wanted : what we need is painting that shall again take its proper place as the sister art to architecture ; and the same may be said of sculpture. There are a few artists—a few true seers—whose names, perhaps, are only known to the few, but whose work could ill be spared, for

it has something to say. But if the many painters whose names have become household words with the public because their pictures appear, year after year, at the Royal Academy and other exhibitions of the type, in a wearisome reiteration of ideas that have long since become commonplace—if these would only employ the powers which many of them undoubtedly possess in the production of other and useful work, we might again see a vital and progressive school of painting in this country. The annual output of historical and anecdotal canvases is as valueless to the community as it is meaningless and tiresome to the individual. There is no use for it. Yet architecture has need of the painter still.

Was it not Michelangelo who painted the roof of the Sistine Chapel? Did not Pinturicchio produce his finest work on the walls of the Vatican, and in the library of Siena Cathedral? Could the saintly

Angelico have been better employed than in doing those lovely frescoes in the Monastery of San Marco? Was not Leonardo often employed in doing useful work, which the modern artist would consider too prosaic to be worth doing well?

Until the modern artist is content to labour wherever the work of his hand is needed, our churches, no less than our houses, will continue to be furnished by men who are excellent in manufacturing articles of every-day use, but powerless to inspire a useful thing with beauty.

SCULPTURE

Unlike painting, sculpture was late to appear in Christian buildings. The early Christians were inclined to distrust anything that might be suggestive of idolatry to the ignorant mind.

The Byzantine artists admitted it in the carving of capitals and courses, but chiefly brought their energies to bear upon



Photo. *[Neuirdein.*
DETAIL OF SCULPTURE FROM SAINT GILLES.
(12th century.)

designs in mosaic ; and the earlier Romanesque buildings, though filled with rich decorative work in painting, contain little or nothing in the way of sculpture.

It was not until the end of the sixth century that statuary began to rank with the other decorative arts. About that time figures of saints appeared on choir railings and screens, and doorways began to be covered with ornamental sculpture, which finally developed into profuse figure decoration. The great doorway in *Sant' Iago* at Compostella has already been mentioned as an example of the splendour to which sculpture attained at the height of the Romanesque period. It is perhaps only rivalled by the beautiful portal of the church at St. Gilles, near the mouth of the Rhone. This triple doorway, as grand and simple in disposition as it is exquisite and refined in workmanship, is particularly interesting (together with that of *S. Trophime* at Arles), in marking, geographically, the point of entrance into



DETAIL OF SCULPTURE FROM THE SOUTH PORCH OF
CHARTRES CATHEDRAL. (Early 13th century.)

France of such Byzantine influence as the Romanesque displays.

In Italy, from the thirteenth century, when Niccolo and Giovanni Pisano produced the pulpits at Pisa and Siena, down to the sixteenth century, when Michelangelo left unfinished the superb Madonna and Child (see *Frontispiece*), now in the new sacristy of *S. Lorenzo* in Florence, the sculptor's art ranked with painting as the sister of architecture.

In the North the Gothic spirit gave birth to its own incomparable sculpture. The cathedrals of *Chartres*, *Rheims*, *Amiens*, and many other places are full of this wonderful work. Mr. Lethaby says: "*The finest Gothic sculpture takes its place as the crown of architecture, the subject-matter is of high epic character, and the workmanship worthily answers to the intention. . . . To the mediæval mind sculptures had something of the supernatural about them. They were creations; and it may be doubted, with all admiration for the stone and bronze dolls made*

from the stone and bronze dolls made

from the stone and bronze dolls made

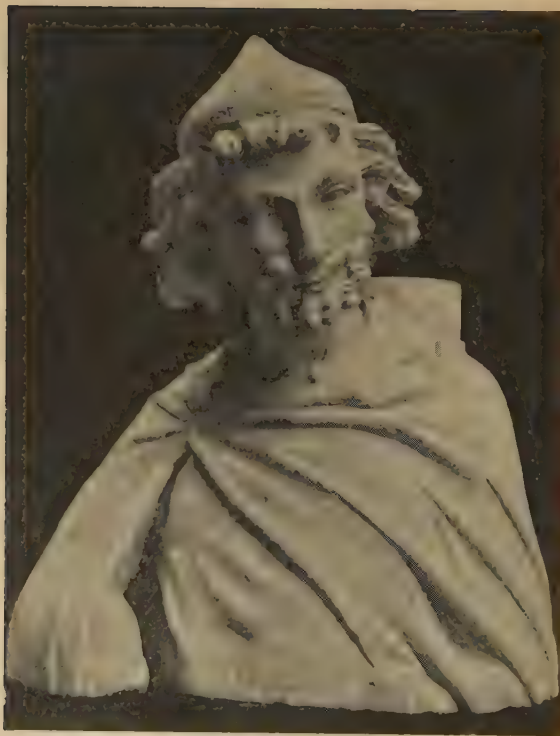


Photo.]

[Giraudon.

JOSEPH, FROM THE PRESENTATION GROUP. RHEIMS
CATHEDRAL. (13th century.)

*by modern hands, whether the finest art can be produced with less imaginative emotion."*¹

How true this is may be judged from such work as the reredos in *S. Paul's Cathedral* (which, by the way, is quite unworthy of the late Mr. Bodley, who merely adapted the design), or from the sculptured figures in the great screens at *Winchester* and *St. Albans*.

Indeed, it is difficult to think of any recent decorative sculpture in our churches, except the Wellington Memorial (by Alfred Stevens) which is not, like the whole class of modern graveyard sculpture, soulless and superficial. There is no life nor meaning that transcends the encasing stone, only a fixed emotionless pose, as obvious in conception as it is unconvincing in form and expression.

ROOFS

It has always been customary to decorate the timber-work of roofs and ceilings in

¹ W. R. Lethaby, *Mediæval Art*. London, 1904.



Photo.]

[Giraudon.

ANGEL FROM THE ANNUNCIATION GROUP. RHEIMS
CATHEDRAL. (13th century.)

colour. Many of the early basilicas owe much of their beauty to the treatment which their roofs received.

In England the oldest existing specimen of this kind of decoration is, probably, the flat Norman roof in *Peterborough Cathedral*, belonging to the twelfth century. There seems to be no thirteenth-century work left in this country, but there are innumerable church-roofs, dating from the fourteenth century onwards, in which the remains of very fine colouring are still to be seen, together with magnificent carved decoration.

The English builders always treated their woodwork with consummate skill. They “*invented and developed a variety of forms of roof-truss, in which the proper distribution of the strains was combined with a highly decorative treatment of the several parts, by carving, moulding, and arcading. The ceiling surfaces between the trusses were handled decoratively, and the oaken open-timber ceilings of many English churches and civic*

*and academic halls (such as Christ Church Hall at Oxford, or Westminster Hall) are such noble and beautiful works as to justify the substitution of wooden for vaulted ceilings."*¹

There seems to have been a marked preference for timber roofs in this country, even at the period when stone vaulting reached its highest point in elaboration and refinement. The carpenter vied with the mason, and his work was, in its own way, as finely constructed and as highly ornamental.

At the present time the vaulted roof is being used a good deal in church building, and some of the modern vaults and domeings in stone, brick, and concrete, are very beautiful. But the timber roof will always remain with us: it is a structure into which it is possible to introduce great beauty of form, by simple and inexpensive means. We do not expect to see elaborate oaken roofs, because

¹ A. D. F. Hamlin, *A History of Architecture*. New York, 1896.

the majority of newly-formed parishes cannot afford it : but that is no reason why the roof of less costly material should not be made to contribute to the beauty of the building. It calls for little artistic power and originality on the part of the architect to make the most of such materials as are obtainable.

Where there are no clerestory windows, to take a simple instance, and the upper part of the church is ill-lighted, to whiten the ceiled surfaces between the rafters has been found very effective. Such a method relieves the sense of oppression and heaviness that one has experienced in many churches. In the case of rich and well-designed timber work (which may even be darkened to heighten the effect) it enables one to appreciate a beauty of form that must otherwise be lost in obscurity.

In lofty and well-lighted churches the roof should be treated with special care. So large an expanse of one material, practically undivided and of the same quality

throughout the church, has a much greater influence than most people realize upon the general feeling of the building.

It is a great pity that the modern designer pays so little attention to the roof and its decoration. One has only to compare the highly-varnished pitch-pine roof—generally of a bright yellow colour—in one of our new sea-side churches, with the treatment of pine-wood by the Swiss and Norwegian carpenters of the fifteenth century, to realize that the difference is not in the materials, but in the men who use them, and in the standard of excellence which they have in view.

PAVEMENTS

Ennius Quirinus Visconti, an excavator of Ostia, has suggested that certain mosaic pavements found there, dating from the time of Septimius Severus (A.D. 193–211), were designed in imitation of the carpets of Alexandria. Whatever may have in-

spired this beautiful form of decoration, it was very generally adopted in Roman times, the floors of Christian basilicas, in common with other public buildings, being overlaid with mosaic.

In the British Museum there is part of a mosaic pavement, brought from Carthage, which is undoubtedly Christian, and probably takes us back to the fourth century.

Many fine floors of inlaid marble, dating from the tenth and eleventh centuries, may be seen in Greece: and it was from Greek sources that the "Cosmati" work of Rome developed in the twelfth century.

There had been an interval of some centuries, during which the art of mosaic seems to have been forgotten in Italy, before this work, known at the time as *Opus Alexandrinum*, made its appearance. It consisted of small pieces of precious red, green, and yellow marbles, arranged in meandering bands round spacious disks of porphyry and verde antique—the latter



Photo.,

[Alinari.]

DETAIL FROM THE BAPTISTERY PAVEMENT AT FLORENCE.
(A.D. 1200.)

being obtained, as a rule, ready shaped, from columns found in ancient ruins which were sawn into segments.

At the same time a large number of mosaics were executed in black and white stones, corresponding to the early *Opus Tessellatum*.

The earliest examples of this revived use of floor mosaics are to be found in *San Clemente*, *Sta. Maria Maggiore*, and *Sta. Maria in Trastevere*, in Rome.

Torcello Cathedral and *S. Mark's*, at Venice, have floors of splendid colour and design, which date from the twelfth century.

The floor of the *Baptistery* at Florence, belonging to the thirteenth century, is one of the finest mosaics in existence. Wrought into chevrons and rippling patterns of white, dark green, and dull red marbles, with inlaid designs of animals and figures—in one splendid square the signs of the Zodiac and a lengthy inscription—it is as beautiful a work of the kind as can well be imagined.



Photo.]

[Brogi.

DETAIL FROM THE PAVEMENT IN SIENA CATHEDRAL.
A.D. 1481. (Matteo di Giovanni.)

The sanctuary pavement in *Westminster Abbey*, which was laid down in A.D. 1268, is an example of the best kind of coloured mosaic, only too rare in this country. The ground-work is of English marble, but the porphyry and other materials of which the mosaic itself is composed were brought from Rome. It originally contained inscriptions in bronze letters, let into the marble; but these have nearly all disappeared.

The Italian tomb of Henry III (*d.* 1272), also in the Abbey, is another beautiful specimen of the use of porphyry and verde antique, in conjunction with Roman Cosmati work.

Mention must be made of the unique pavement in *Siena Cathedral*, which is an example of a different kind of inlaid work, known as "Tarsia." It was begun in A.D. 1423, from pictorial designs by eminent artists of the time. The earlier portions are in outline only, engraved in white marble and filled with dark stucco;

but the work was finished in coloured marble and a more elaborate style, the early "graffito" method having developed into rich mosaic.

Burnt and glazed tiles, with inlaid patterns in colour, have been largely used in the paving of churches and cathedrals. The practice arose about the eleventh century. Portions of such pavements may still be seen in many parts of England. These "encaustic" tiles usually made up tapestry-like patterns in which symmetrical arrangements of line were broken up by simple flower design and free figure representation. The general colour scheme was brick-red and yellow, which imparted a delightful warmth and quality to buildings in which they were laid. It is a great pity that the tiles which are manufactured to-day are so wanting in quality and beauty of design that they are practically useless for purely decorative work.

But a good deal of attention has been

paid to the treatment of floors in recent times, and some excellent design and workmanship have been displayed, especially in the use of marble. Several churches designed by the late Mr. Bodley have sanctuary and other pavements of considerable beauty. Apart from the simple and dignified use of comparatively large squares of black and white marble, with intersecting bands or radiating designs, there are examples of smaller mosaic, and inlaid work. The sanctuary of *Eccleston Church*, near Chester, and Mr. Gilbert Scott's pavement in the Lady Chapel of *Liverpool Cathedral* serve to show how much can be done to enrich the floor with simple but effective treatment.

CHAPTER XI

Painted Glass

IT has been said, "*The window of dyed glass is the most perfect art-form known. So any one must feel who has watched the changing lines of the windows of Chartres, Bourges, or Rheims, through a summer's afternoon from the hour when the shadows of the flying buttresses fall in great bands across the burning glass, to the twilight, when they fade and hardly glimmer in the gloom of the vaults.*"¹

There is in glass, as in little else, something of the mystery, something of the passing wonder of the colours of nature. It absorbs into itself the light—the very medium through which we feel all colour.

Glass-painting, since its rise under the

¹ W. R. Lethaby, *Mediaeval Art*. London, 1904.



MOSAIC GLASS IN THE SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM FROM
THE SAINTS CHAPELLE, PARIS. (13th century.) •

early Gothic stimulus, has ever played the foremost part in the decoration of Christian buildings.

Up to the middle of the thirteenth century coloured windows consisted of small fragments of glass pieced together in the manner of a *mosaic* according to the requirements of the design. Only pure colours were used—the most common being crimson and azure of intense depth and richness—among which small pieces of white, yellow, and green, were sparingly introduced to give a sparkling and vivid effect. The glass was coloured *right through*, except in the case of “ruby,” which was always *flushed*; that is to say, a thin coating of red glass was fused on to “white,” or clear, glass.

In the fourteenth century the glass partially lost this mosaic character. The pieces were not cut so small: the colours were more transparent and lighter in tone, and the subject-matter began to assume greater importance.

The fifteenth century saw more powerful and comprehensive design and a greater freedom of treatment. There is a very beautiful window of this period behind the High Altar of *Sta. Maria Novella*, in Florence, executed by Alessandro Fiorentino, in A.D. 1492. In the treatment of the figures and architectural detail there is a great dignity. They are not over-emphasized by cast shadows, nor are they conceived in a realistic way. In fact, if the window is viewed from half-way down the church the subject is hardly discernible : it is lost in the general blaze of brilliant and harmonious colour, yet so rich is the quality of the glass that in the choir, immediately below, there is hardly enough light to do justice to Ghirlandajo's frescoes.

The first half of the sixteenth century saw the Golden Age of painted glass. Under the revivals in other arts window painting became more pictorial ; but, while every legitimate means was employed to

give significance to the design, the work almost invariably shows respect for conventions and a faithful acceptance of the limitations of the craft.

In the windows of *Fairford Church* we see the glass of this period at its best; and in nearly all of them the original glazing is in a singularly perfect state of preservation. They show how much the art had advanced during the early years of the century. The drawing of the figures and drapery is good; the painting of the shadows, though perfectly transparent, is strong and deep in tone; throughout the series we recognize the work of men whose aim was to combine richness and warmth of colour with simple powerful design.

It has been thought by some that glass-painting should be confined to the massing of splendid and dazzling colours, in a "mosaic of coloured fire," appealing only to the colour-sense. Yet the east window of *S. Margaret's, Westminster* (circ. A.D.



Photo.]

- [*Cyril Ellis.*

THE CRUCHINGTON WINDOW, ST. MARGARET'S, WESTMINSTER.
(16th century.)

1526), is no less beautiful in the splendour of its colour than the mosaic glass of the earlier centuries, and has, in addition, a pictorial excellence that in no way violates the essential conditions of the art.

It was a disregard for these conditions, following upon the discovery of the possibilities of enamelling, which led to the decline in the second half of the sixteenth century. In the process of enamelling pure coloured glass may be overlaid with pigment and then fired. Thus it is possible to produce a variety of colours and shades in the same piece of glass ; blue glass, for instance, can be made green or purple in patches by the simple application of yellow or red pigment, respectively. At first enamels were only used sparingly to give local effect. But the practice afforded such tremendous possibilities, from a pictorial point of view, that the art soon degenerated into a form of painting in which the peculiar beauty of coloured glass was effectually lost.

Most of the work of the eighteenth century, and of the first half of the nineteenth century, is notoriously bad. Painful in colour, incompetent in design and workmanship, wholly lacking in quality—it has done more to disfigure cathedrals and churches throughout the land than any other form of decoration.

Most of the glass of this period might well be destroyed.

Since the middle of the nineteenth century there has been a revival of glass-painting, and a few competent artists have done really good work : nor is the present day without promise of even better things to come. On the other hand, a great deal of bad glass is being manufactured on purely commercial lines. The big stores and business houses can produce a stained glass window almost as readily as a suite of furniture, and with as little concern for the place and purpose for which it is intended. So we are content to fill our churches with windows, from which not

only the most rudimentary knowledge of figure treatment and arrangement, but all the charm of the technical properties of the medium, are conspicuous by their absence; yet there are few mediums in which bad design or bad taste in the conception of the artist are more painfully obvious.

In painted glass, as in every other form of decorative art, the first thing to be considered is not the degree of realism that can be introduced, nor the skill with which natural objects may be imitated, but the decorative effect. Nor is it only in the greater qualities of design and colour that the art has such tremendously decorative possibilities, but in the technique, in the leading-up, in the shape-cutting, in the effective application of pigment—in all these lies a great part of the beauty of the medium.

The artist who would express himself in coloured glass should have great taste as a designer, and a highly cultivated and*

refined sense of colour : but, in addition to these, he must have—what few modern craftsmen possess—a sense of the quality of his materials, and a whole-hearted acceptance of the limitations and conventions of his art ; for it is too often forgotten that the observance of the limitations of every art, and not the doing away with them, leads most surely to beautiful results.

Because we only rarely find these gifts combined in the craftsmen of to-day, we are content to excuse the badness of our windows by the assertion that glass-painting is “a lost art” ! *No art is lost as long as there is a need for it to serve.* It is not the technical means of expression—the secrets of the craft—it is the taste and the creative mind of the artist, which are lacking. Given these great factors, the means to express them will never be wanting.

CHAPTER XII

The Sanctuary and Baptistery

IN considering the Altar and other furniture of the Sanctuary, we shall treat them only as decorative features of the building, avoiding ecclesiological questions as far as possible. A wider and most able treatment of the subject will be found in *The Chancel and Altar*, by Mr. Harold King. The whole sphere of embroidered decoration may also be studied in another volume of the series—*Church Embroidery*, by Miss Alice Dryden—and is therefore omitted here.

The early altars were massive in construction, but varied a good deal in other respects. Those in *Hagia Sophia*, at Constantinople, and in the mortuary

church founded by S. Helena at Jerusalem, both of the fourth century, were covered with gold and adorned with precious stones.

On the other hand, the chief altar of *S. Vitale*, at Ravenna, belonging to the fourth century, consists of three simple slabs of stone, two acting as supports, and the third as the table. A heavy slab, resting on four or five short columns, was another form common to both the sixth and seventh centuries.

The majority of Romanesque altars had a massive rectangular base, covered by a projecting bevelled slab : the flat surfaces were usually without ornament, but were spread with rich stuffs.

The High Altar of *Sant' Ambrogio*, at Milan, of the ninth century, is faced on all sides with a splendid "antependium" of gold, with designs executed in high relief, and rich borders of filigree ornamented with precious stones. It is the oldest example of this style that has been

handed down to us. There is a somewhat similar altar, from Bâle, in the Musée de Cluny, in Paris, with figures set in an arcading, surrounded by designs of foliage and animals.

These gorgeous frontals, whose very splendour has been the chief cause of their destruction, must, in any case, have been rare: the commoner ones were composed of less valuable materials—painted wooden panels, framed embroideries, or simple loosely-hung coverings.

Such were the general characteristics of the early Christian altar. It was covered on the top by fine cloths of white linen, on which, as time went on, were sometimes placed a candle or two candles, together with the mass-book, and occasionally a cross.

Another form of altar, which came into use during the Romanesque period, is known as the "Wall-Altar," or altar of relics. Owing to the increased honour paid to the relics of the saints, it became

customary to enshrine them in gorgeous reliquaries, which were placed on a wall at the back of the altar. This wall or "superfrontal" was really a part of the altar rising above the level of the table, and was treated in the same way as the antependium, with carving in relief or metal coverings. The "*Pala d'oro*" in *S. Mark's*, at Venice, is the oldest example that we have : it was made at Constantinople in A.D. 967, though a great deal of work has been done upon it since that date.

Mention has been made of the use of reliquaries. They were, in the Middle Ages, often constructed of the most beautiful and costly materials. Gold, silver, and gems were lavished upon them, but not the least beautiful of all the various kinds were those executed in *enamel*. The process of enamelling, or of fusing coloured glass on to metal, or any other substance that will survive the heat of the furnace, is of great antiquity.

Specimens of true enamel executed by the Greeks may be seen in the British Museum. Byzantine enamels of the greatest beauty are common in every European museum ; so too are the French and German enamels of the Western Church ; of the latter, very few examples exist which were executed prior to the eleventh century. There are several different kinds of enamel work, known as "Cloisonné," "Champlevé" and "Basse-taille," and "Limoges" or painted enamels, all of which may be studied in the great national collection at South Kensington. Space will not admit of a description of these various methods of enamelling, but a study of the beautiful Reliquaries, Crucifixes, Candlesticks, Triptychs, and Book-covers, executed in gold, silver, and copper — which was gilded and enriched with gems, will show the splendour of the accessories which have contributed to the outward beauty of the services of the Church.



12TH CENTURY ENAMELLED CRUCIFIX IN SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM. (Godefroid de Claire of Huys.)

In very early times the custom arose of building over the altar a ciborium, or "baldacchino," resting upon columns, with curtains hung between them—which were drawn together by the celebrant at the most solemn moments of the mass. These beautiful canopies are to be seen in many places : that at *Sant' Ambrogio*, at Milan, to which we have referred in another chapter, is representative of the best work of the thirteenth century.

The decoration of Romanesque altars had been the work of goldsmiths. In the period of transition from the Romanesque to the Gothic it was entrusted to the care of stone-carvers. But, with the full emergence of the Gothic, the work passed into the hands of wood-carvers and painters ; and it is to the latter that we owe the many different forms of carved and painted triptychs and altar-pieces, which came into use about the fourteenth century, and, until the middle of the sixteenth century, were preferred



Photo.]

[*Alinari.*

EARLY 16TH CENTURY TRIPTYCH IN ENAMEL. (Nardon Penicaud.)

to all other methods of decorating the immediate setting of the altar.

In Italy and elsewhere the altar-pieces were often painted and sculptured by the great masters themselves ; so that many of them have become works of universal fame. At the same time the carved and gilded frames were executed with infinite taste and skill by craftsmen who were no less artists in their own line than those for whose panels and canvases they provided so beautiful a setting.

The great altar-piece by Carlo Crivelli, in the National Gallery, is a superb example of the best Italian work. The well-known triptychs of Van Eyck and Memling are typical of the work of the northern schools, and also of the incomparable brilliance of colour which is one of the distinctive marks of Flemish painting.

In England, to-day, the altar itself is generally hidden by frontals and linen coverings, and whatever decoration its structure bears is rarely exposed to view.



Photo.]

[*Alinari*

SCULPTURE OF S. MATTHEW, FROM THE HIGH ALTAR OF
S. ANTONIO AT PADUA, CIRC. 1446. (Donatello.)

But one feels with regard to the altar and its accessories, that, whether visible or not, the best workmanship, and the best only, can be worthy of the use to which it is dedicated.

The altar should be the richest and most prominent object in the church—visible, as far as possible, from every part of the building. It should stand clear of the wall, and should not be dominated in any way by other furniture of the sanctuary, which chiefly exists to give it greater dignity. Too often an ill-considered reredos, or gradines covered with candles and flowers in the worst taste, though intended to enhance the beauty of the altar, only dwarf it by drawing attention upon themselves.

The correct English altar, with its rubrical ornaments of the Cross and two candlesticks, is undoubtedly the most dignified form for modern use, especially when surrounded by riddels. *If it be properly situated and of the right dimensions,*

it will not be overwhelmed even by an imposing reredos or triptych, provided these latter are themselves in harmony with the building.

A pair of standard candlesticks, if they are sufficiently heavy, make a very happy contribution to the general decorative effect, and, in conjunction with a reredos, may be specially useful in giving a certain balance to the whole arrangement of the sanctuary.

When the altar is not placed in front of a low wall—as for instance, in Westminster Abbey—but backed by the end wall of the church, the reredos is often made in the form of a triptych. Its shape and size, of course, must be largely determined by the position of the windows, the width of the chancel, and the general dimensions of the sanctuary. Modern stone-work is seldom satisfactory ; but some beautiful altar-pieces have recently been set up in wood. Indeed, where large reredoses are possible,

they are generally constructed of wood, with canopy work, and figures carved in the round — the whole being richly coloured and gilt. They may also be worked with panels of gesso in low relief — a very beautiful medium on which gilding and colour tell to the best advantage. It should be remembered that gesso is in no way a substitute for carving. The two are totally different in quality. Good gesso-work has no sharp edges or deep under-cutting, such as the chisel produces in wood. Its chief beauty consists in finely modelled and rounded forms which cannot be achieved in any other medium.

It is, perhaps, in the production of painted and sculptured reredoses, altar-pieces, and other works of a similar nature, that the present day suffers most from the lack of real artists. Under modern conditions the architect, who is, of course, responsible for everything that has a permanent place in the building, is

seldom capable of designing well—far less of executing—the smaller and more decorative furniture of a church.

But if modern design is not of the type that produces work suitable in one way, there is no reason why we should not develop other methods and excel in other ways. The architect whose power of design does not extend to the smaller but no less important details (if such men are to be employed) should seek out others, who, from a practical knowledge of craft-work, are capable of being given, under due supervision, a more or less free hand, both as to design and execution.

At any rate let him avoid the stereotyped patterns of Sanctuary furniture, no less than of Fonts, Screens, Pulpits, and other articles which usually figure in the commercial catalogue. It is grievous to think of the strange productions, classified as "Gothic" or "Renaissance," which can sometimes be obtained, almost by return

of post, with only the aid of an illustrated price-list issued by some advertising firm.

Surely the sanctuary, like everything else which surrounds the central act of Christian worship, should contain nothing but the best that we can offer. Here, at least, there should be no discordant note, even in the material surroundings, to mar the perfect harmony of the Eucharistic service.

Since the font is only second to the altar in spiritual significance, it is but fitting that it should be designed and set up with the same reverent consideration for the dignity of its outward appearance.

So much importance did the mediaeval Church attach to the act of initiation into the Christian community, that, throughout the Middle Ages, in Italy, the font was placed in a separate building hard by



Photo.,

Alinari.

INTERIOR OF THE BAPTISTERY AT RAVENNA. (6th century.)

the church, reserved exclusively for this rite, and the baptisteries of Ravenna, Pisa, Florence, and many other towns, bear witness to the wealth of thought and workmanship which the mediaeval artists bestowed upon the place of baptism.

In the Romanesque period the separate baptistery disappeared, and it became customary to place the font within the church. Succeeding ages have produced their own peculiar types of font, all more or less the same in principle, but varying in form and decoration, according to the taste of each period.

The Romanesque font was usually of stone, and cylindrical in shape. It often bore ornamentation in the form of arcading, and sometimes very charming pictorial designs.

The Norman font in *Winchester Cathedral* is an example of the finest Romanesque work. It was probably presented to the cathedral by Bishop Henry de Blois (1129-1171). It is made of black



(Photo.)

NORMAN FONT, WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL. (Tenth century.) [W T Green.]

Tourney or slate stone of beautiful quality. The form is that of a square block resting upon a central circular pedestal and four detached columns, which rise out of a shallow bevelled base, square like the basin above. The upper block is richly carved. Figures, a ship, and a church, appear upon it in strong relief, together with various designs embodying grapes, doves, and a lion. The pedestal is corrugated horizontally, and the columns, base, and under side of the upper block, are also richly decorated with deeply-cut and effective grooving, which help to give the whole structure a feeling of massive dignity and strength.

There are several fonts of a similar type, but few as noble in design.

The Gothic fonts were very different. The tendency was to make them more delicate and graceful, and to substitute the octagon for the square or circle, as the underlying figure. Ornamentation took the form of rich traceries, and sometimes

figures and reliefs. Raised upon steps, and surmounted by lofty and richly decorated covers of wood, these later fonts became objects of imposing beauty.

Ufford Church, in Suffolk, contains a magnificent late perpendicular font-cover. Suspended from the rafters of the nave, it rises to a great height in successive stages of canopy-work and arcading, carved in oak, and coloured in rich reds and blues, relieved by heavy gilding.

Occasionally, the font is placed in a special baptistry, screened off from the body of the church—a plan which has much to commend it from an artistic point of view.

The architect is often at a loss for means of introducing beauty of colour and form into the less ornate parts of his building. The font and its screen provide an opportunity for much beautiful work at the west end of the church, which generally suffers from a lack of decorative interest.

Moreover, it emphasizes the importance of the Sacrament which it serves, if the font is given a dignified position, in which it cannot be too nearly approached, except at the time of baptism.

CHAPTER XIII

General Furniture

THE furniture of the sanctuary and baptistery having been dealt with in a separate chapter, the following pages will be devoted to a brief consideration of the decorative treatment of altar-rails, pulpits, lecterns, and organs.

SCREENS AND ALTAR-RAILS

The earliest form of screen was a stone balustrade, enclosing the presbyterium. Connected with it by flights of steps were the "ambones," from which the Gospel and Epistle were read. In mediaeval times the choir-balustrades were retained in order to define the space allotted to the

clergy from the rest of the building ; but the ambones disappeared, because the custom arose of reading from a gallery built across the church, and called, from its use, "Lectorium." In England these screens are usually known as "rood-lofts" or "rood-screens," from their being surmounted by the Holy Cross.

We have in England the remains of many very beautiful screens. Some are executed in stone, but the majority are of wood. The latter material—almost as durable as stone, and capable of more refined workmanship—is a medium which offers unrivalled opportunities to the designer and craftsman.

We will mention one example, the magnificent screen at *Ranworth*, in Norfolk, which in its own unique way is unsurpassed in England. It was built between A.D. 1470 and A.D. 1500, and designed to include two altars. The plan is a most happy and decorative arrangement. The whole screen is covered with



THE S. GEORGE PANEL IN THE RANWORTH SCREEN.
(15th century.)

painting of the highest order, some of the panels being representative of the best figure design of the period.

One cannot overestimate the decorative value of the rood-screen in a church, for not only does it offer a field for choice carving and splendid colour, but it has a strangely unifying effect upon the whole building, and adds dignity and mystery to many a church, which without it would be cold and bare.

Several excellent screens have been erected in recent years. It is enough to mention one only, that in the Church of *S. Agnes, Kennington*. This screen contains the organ, the two halves of which are set back into the lofty transepts in such a way as to be quite invisible from the body of the church. The rood is borne upon a beam or "perk," placed a little higher than the top of the screen, and spanning the nave in a graceful curve. There is some very good wrought-iron work in the lower part of the screen, and



Photo.]

[*Lombardi.*

15TH CENTURY IRON SCREEN IN THE PALAZZO PUBBLICO,
SIENA. (Giacomo di Vito.)

the general arrangement and spontaneous decorative effect of the whole structure make it one of the most pleasing examples of its kind.

Stone-screens are occasionally erected, but modern stone-carving, as we have said above, is rarely successful. Even when the designs are good the execution is left to commercial masons and stone-carvers, whose work is seldom worthy of so commanding a position.

Much good work might be done in wrought iron. Metal screens abound in all parts of Europe, where noble iron-work has been produced. Italy is specially rich in such work. The beautiful screen by Giacomo di Vito, in the *Chapel of the Palazzo Pubblico* at Siena, is a good example of the grandeur and simplicity of this metal at its best. The Catalan ironwork in Spain, which may be studied in the cathedral and the museum at Barcelona, is famous for its beauty. In England there are many small examples of the finest

work. The curved iron grill, for instance, over the tomb of Eleanor of Castille (*d.* 1290) in *Westminster Abbey*, executed by Master Thomas, of Leghtone, is exquisite in design and workmanship.

A modern rood-screen, placed in *S. Bartholomew's, Smithfield*, by Sir Aston Webb, may be taken as a good example of the possibilities in this direction.

It is not too much to hope that many a church whose screen was destroyed in an age of ignorant iconoclasm may receive in our own day new but not less worthy work.

Altar-rails first came into general use in this country in the time of Archbishop Laud. The destruction of screens had left the choir and sanctuary open and unprotected; rails were therefore erected to guard the altar—which at this time

was generally being restored to its proper place in the church—from the heedless indecencies of the Protestantism of the period.

The rails were often very beautiful. They were generally made of carved wood, and extended the whole width of the chancel, with gates in the centre to give access to the sanctuary.

Under modern conditions the sanctuary is not in the same need of protection. The only use of rails to-day is to provide support for those who, by reason of age or infirmity, find difficulty in kneeling at the Communion. This purpose will be served if the rails are placed on either side of the chancel—there is no reason for extending them in front of the altar. Modern rails, intended to give support, should be heavily constructed with a wide flat top. Any suitable material may be used, and they may be decorated in any way compatible with their use. But the common, extending type of brass, or,

worse still, the wooden rail carried upon flimsy metal supports, is quite unsuitable, and invariably unworthy in appearance.

The decorative value of this piece of furniture depends entirely upon the general arrangement of the choir and sanctuary. Altar-rails offer a field for work which has often proved very effective, but in the majority of churches they constitute an intrusion, which is all the more deplorable on account of the poverty of their design and workmanship.

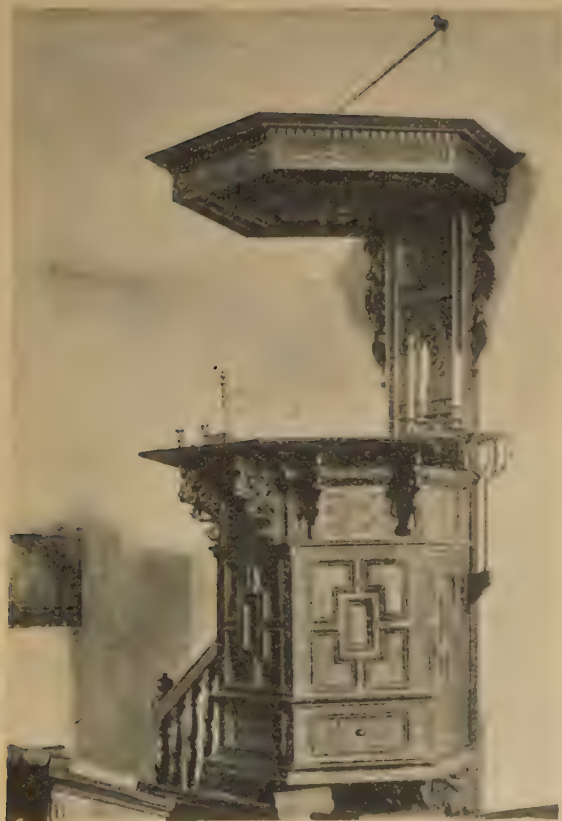
PULPITS AND LECTERNS

The ambo was the earliest form both of pulpit and lectern. Originally it had been the custom for the bishop to preach from his raised *cathedra* in the apse behind the altar. But as the churches became larger, the ambones, which were nearer the congregation, though intended primarily for the reading of the Scriptures, were also used for preaching.

In the *Cathedral* at Ravenna there are several marble slabs, carved with figures of animals, birds, and fishes, and bearing the inscription, *Servus Christi Agnellus Episcopus hunc pyrgum fecit*. They are the remains of an ambo, erected by Archbishop Agnellus (A.D. 556–569), and may be said to constitute the oldest pulpit known to exist.

In the eleventh century the Emperor Henry II presented to the *Minster at Aix-la-Chapelle* an ambo of wood covered with plates of copper-gilt, and adorned with panels in ivory, set with jewels and enamels.

But the pulpit as we know it did not develop until the thirteenth century. At first it was generally of stone, and was placed either in connection with the screen or against one of the piers in the nave. The pulpit itself was often decorated with the finest sculpture, while sounding-boards, placed, for acoustic purposes, a few feet above the head of the preacher, provided



[Kingsbury Photo. Co.]

WOODEN PULPIT IN S. MICHAEL'S CHURCH, S. ALBANS.
(Early 17th century.)

an excuse for the erection of lofty wooden pinnacles of exquisite canopy-work, enriched with colour and gold.

The modern pulpit, when it is of wood, is often executed with taste and refinement. But the stone pulpit of to-day is usually quite tasteless in design, and often rendered needlessly ugly by the use of ill-assorted marbles, carved with neither power nor restraint, according to the execrable fancy of the commercial stonemason. This is only another instance in which the ready-made article is always out of place. It is for the architect to see that the pulpit is in keeping, both as regards material and style, with the particular building for which it is intended.

The lectern developed as a separate structure in Gothic times. It was used for reading the Gospel at Mass, and was often cast in bronze in the form of an eagle with outstretched wings, the symbol of the evangelist S. John. Many of the old lecterns in which this figure was em-

ployed were very beautiful, because the bird was treated with simplicity and directness, and without the realistic naturalness which makes the modern brazen production so unpleasing. Since we seem to be quite incapable of representing an eagle to-day, except by *imitating* the natural bird, feather for feather, we should do better to model our lecterns upon the later four-square desk, which attained to great beauty of form in the Middle Ages. The heavy Chanter's desks, which are so common in the choirs of Italian and Spanish churches, with their beautiful inlaid and carved decoration, might well be taken as patterns (for a somewhat lighter design) suitable for use as a lectern. Both designer and craftsman would find in them an opportunity for much beautiful work.

The mention of chanter's desks recalls another form of decorative work which the mediaeval church brought to wonderful perfection. I mean the illumination

of missals, books of hours, and the great music-books or antiphonals which are to be seen in every large museum.

Before the invention of printing the work of scribes and illuminators had made many a monastery and town famous throughout Europe. Winchester, for instance, ranked about the thirteenth century as one of the leading schools of illumination; in the collection of MSS. at Rouen there are shown two very beautiful examples of Winchester work. And Winchester itself, in the cathedral library, treasures with just pride a twelfth-century Vulgate in three volumes (imperial folio), with splendid illuminations which surpass any work of contemporary date on the Continent.

With the invention of printing, the art of illumination declined, though many an early printed book has capitals drawn and coloured by hand and richly gilded. But the inevitable production of large quantities of printed matter necessarily resulted in

the use of woodcuts, and engravings on metal, in the place of original drawings and illuminations.

However, printing and the attendant art of bookbinding have produced, in their turn, a vast quantity of most beautiful work. During the seventeenth century men like Caslon and Baskerville raised the somewhat dreary and dull level of English printing, and published works remarkable for beauty of lettering and the charm which belongs to good spacing and design.

In our own day individual artist-printers and bookbinders often do work which is as good as anything that has been done since the printing-press revolutionized the art of book-making. The illuminated manuscript has also been revived in a modern form. There is, indeed, no reason why our service-books, especially those of the altar, should not rival the work of the past, and be printed, illuminated, and covered with the same loving care. 

ORGAN-CASES

Lastly, mention must be made of organ-cases ; for why should not the organ be a source of delight to the eye as well as to the ear ? Often the instrument, owing to the exigencies of space, has to take a prominent place in a church. When this is the case it should be made to fill that position in a dignified and pleasing manner.

The first organ to be introduced as a permanent part of the church's furniture was one placed by Charlemagne in the *Minster at Aix-la-Chapelle* at the end of the ninth century.

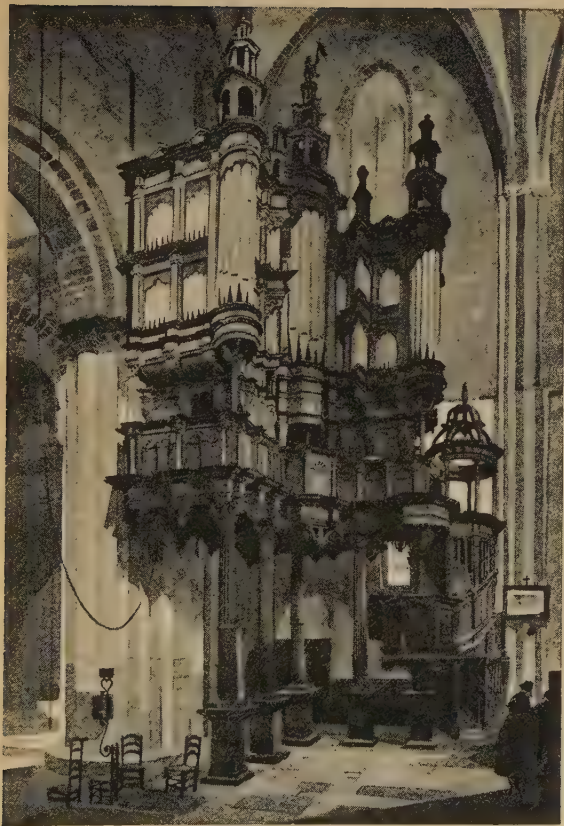
From the tenth century we find the instrument, such as it was, common to all monastic churches.

In the thirteenth century there were generally two organs, one in the choir for the use of the ministers, and a large one at the west end of the nave.

The most beautiful organ-cases, still in

existence, date from the latter part of the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries. The usual form was that which is generally reproduced in modern organs of any size—a symmetrical construction of wood, towered and pinnacled, with projecting members. The great organ in the church of *S. Bertrand de Comminges*, near Luchon, in the French Pyrenées, affords a splendid example of an elaborately-carved case.

Set into a corner of the church, resting with infinite grace on slender corinthian columns, the gallery reached by an open spiral stairway with a landing constructed for use as a pulpit—this organ is one of the most beautiful and charming pieces of furniture imaginable. The energy and freedom with which it is conceived, and the perfect way in which it is adapted to its surroundings, show possibilities of construction which might well inspire the organ builders of our own day to design the cases of their instruments in a more worthy manner.



From a Drawing by the Author.]

ORGAN IN THE CHURCH OF S. BERTRAND DE COMMINGES.
(16th century.)

Many of the old organ-cases are richly coloured and gilded, the metal pipes being allowed to appear and take their place in the general decorative scheme. The front is sometimes provided with great doors, painted on both sides, and opening in the manner of a triptych. During the Renaissance, particularly in Germany and in Italy, some of these cases were such beautiful structures as to compare not unfavourably with the adjacent altar-pieces and reredoses.

To bring the organ into harmony with the general scheme of decoration is a matter of the first importance, requiring much serious consideration on the part both of the architect and the organ-builder. But if these two work together, each respecting the essential elements in the other's craft, it should never be impossible to design organ-cases that would enhance rather than destroy the beauty of the church.

We have already had occasion to refer

to the work of the late Mr. Bodley at Eccleston, near Chester. This church contains a very interesting example of the decorative treatment of an organ. Mr. Bodley conceived the idea of hanging a small organ, high up under the roof of the nave, over the tower-arch : here, the instrument, which is beautiful both in form and colour, provides—in conjunction with the lofty font-cover below—an exceedingly pleasing piece of decoration for the west end of the building. The instrument itself is no longer in use because another has been placed in the choir, but were it needed it could be joined up with the new organ. Indeed, with the present pneumatic and electrically-connected instruments, there is no reason why much of the mechanism of an organ may not be placed in any part of the church which is acoustically suitable.

Of course, in the building of an organ, the first consideration is the beauty of the instrument as a vehicle of sound. But

surely that is not all that is necessary. Among the many things which are not essential to Christian worship, but yet give grace and dignity to the services of the Church, none, perhaps, has such a claim upon the attendant decorative arts as the instrument which introduces music, and so helps to lift the mind of the worshipper on to a higher plane of consciousness.

CHAPTER XIV

Memorials

IN the early ages of Christianity none but the saints were buried within consecrated buildings. But the natural desire of the faithful to find their last resting-place in ground thus hallowed soon abolished so strict a rule ; and, by the beginning of the Romanesque period, it became common for bishops, abbots, princes, and the founders of pious institutions to be buried in the precincts of the church.

At first only the crypts were used for this purpose, but it was not long before the custom spread to every part of the building ; and, as the dead were laid either below the floor or in cavities in the

walls, it became necessary to mark the place of burial by some outward means. To this end stone slabs, often shaped like coffins, were laid over the spot, engraved with distinctive ornaments, such as crosses, croziers, or the chalice, and sometimes with the name of the deceased.

As time went on, a rude representation of the figure was introduced, in simple outline, which, in the fourteenth century, began to take the form of portraiture. Elaborate inscriptions were added, which, with the other engraved lines, were filled with dark-coloured cement, or inlaid with black marble, giving to the work a highly decorative effect.

Very soon the simple expedient of engraving gave place to bolder treatment, in which the figure was carved in high relief, the head supported upon a cushion, the feet resting against some animal or monster. Both in design and execution these early monuments are marked by the greatest refinement and grace.



Photo.]

[*Brogi.*

TOMB OF CARLO BARTOLI IN SIENA CATHEDRAL.
(15th century.)

Italy is particularly rich in memorial-stones of this type. Ruskin, in *Mornings in Florence*, describes two such, both in the floor of *Sta. Croce*, in Florence, the one marking the grave of an ancestor of Gallileo's ; the other, that of John Kedderick, a Bishop of St. Davids, who died there in A.D. 1419, whilst on an embassy from Henry V to Pope Martin V.

In describing the former he illustrates one of the most fundamental facts about sculpture, and indeed about all art. His words, in this connection, are so valuable that I quote them at some length. "*The old man*," he writes, "*lies on a piece of embroidered carpet . . . its exquisitely-wrought fringe and tassels are almost uninjured. And you will, or may, know from this example alone what noble sculpture is.*" He says that, without careful examination, the observer would hardly know that it was a carpet ; adding, "*had it been a modern trick-sculpture, the moment you came to the tomb you would have said, 'Dear me ! how wonderfully that*

carpet is done—it doesn't look like stone in the least : one longs to take it up and beat it, to get the dust off.' Now," he says, "whenever you feel inclined to speak so of a sculptured drapery, be assured, without more ado, the sculpture is base and bad. Nothing is so easy as to imitate drapery in marble. . . . But that is not sculpture—that is mechanical manufacture. No great sculptor, from the beginning of art to the end of it, has ever carved, or ever will, a deceptive drapery. . . . He will carve you a carpet with fringes, elaborated as richly as the natural ones : but always for the sake of the ornamental form, never of the imitation ; yet, seizing the natural character, in the lines he gives, with twenty times the precision and clearness of sight that the mere imitator has." ¹

This is a fundamental law of all artistic expression. Art does not exist to imitate. An understanding and acceptance of this law is essential to a real appreciation of the beautiful in art.

¹ John Ruskin, *Mornings in Florence*. London, 1908.

But this is a digression.

Contemporary with the inlaid memorial-slabs, mentioned above, and similar to them in idea, are the wonderful specimens of decorative work known as "brasses," or engraved brass figures let into a marble or slate ground. Under the Gothic influence they became highly ornate, being designed with canopy work, escutcheons, and inscriptions of the most exquisite design. There is, in *St. Albans Cathedral*, a Flemish brass of peculiar beauty—that of the Abbot Delamere. The abbot died in A.D. 1396, though the brass was made, under his own supervision, about twenty years earlier. I know of no work of the kind, in England at least, that is possessed of greater simplicity and force, or more decorative in feeling. The figure and canopy are wrought with the purest taste, and there is a great dignity and repose about the surrounding figures and accessories, no less than in the calm countenance of the abbot himself. The exquisite



From a Drawing by the Author.]

DETAIL FROM THE DELAMERE BRASS AT S. ALBANS.
(14th century.)

diapering of the ground upon which the figure is set, and of the apparelling of the vestments, are only equalled by the superb characters and spacing of the unfinished inscription, "Hic jacet Dominus Thomas quondam Abbas hujus Monasterii. . . ."

From these pavement memorials, which were produced right up to the beginning of the seventeenth century, we must pass to the rectangular type of tomb, in which the body was laid *above* the level of the floor, covered by a slab, bearing, as a rule, a complete figure sculptured in the round.

Tombs of this class are to be seen everywhere. *Westminster Abbey* has many magnificent examples, as, for instance, the tomb of Edward III (*d.* 1377). Here, upon a stone base of considerable size, under delicate canopy-work enriched with figures in bronze, and armorial accessories in enamel, lies the gilt-bronze effigy of the king—a dignified and simply-conceived figure of great power.

✱



Photo.]

Paint House

14TH CENTURY EFFIGY OF EDWARD III, FROM HIS TOMB IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

(Probably by John Orchard.)

A more elaborate work of art is the tomb of William de Valence, Earl of Pembroke (*d.* 1296). The figure is of oak covered with plates of copper, chased, and enriched with champlevé enamel. The enamelled cushion on which the head rests, and the splendid heraldic shield, are monuments of the use of this beautiful medium. The headpiece has a pierced chaplet, which was originally set with large stones. The figure rests upon an oak chest, once overlaid in the same manner and adorned with thirty-one small mourning figures. Much of the original splendour is gone, but enough remains to show that the beauty of the tomb, and its decorative effect in the sombre light at the abbey, must have been beyond all description.

A later tomb of the same order is that of Sir Giles Daubeney and his wife, of the time of Henry III. It was carefully restored in 1889, by the Daubeney family, and is a fine example of alabaster sculpture, with the accessories relieved in colour.

Under the Renaissance in England it became general to erect, against the walls, monuments of imposing size and beauty surmounted by entablatures, or canopies, resting on columns of coloured marble or alabaster. The effigies lay within an arched recess, in the full dress of the period, and were, as a rule, highly coloured. On the front of these tombs very beautiful workmanship was often displayed in the carving of those delightful diminishing rows of kneeling boys and girls, each youthful head emerging from a great uncrumpled ruff, each pair of hands clasped in an attitude of prayer. The calm, almost monotonous symmetry of pose, which gives an epic character to these inimitable expressions of childhood, is perhaps as typical of the spirit of the Renaissance of the North as the dancing playful "Putti," of Donatello and Luca della Robbia, are characteristic of the more exuberant spirit of the South.

In the decadence which followed the



Photo.]

[Cyril Ellis.

A RENAISSANCE TOMB. (Late 16th century.)

Renaissance, mural monuments of every type were erected, which, so far from being decorative, were actually destructive of the beauty of our churches. The walls and piers were ruthlessly disfigured by ill-designed and grotesque tablets, crowded into every available space, and bearing inscriptions which, like the tablets themselves, commemorate nothing so forcibly as the debased taste and low ideals of a material and self-complaisant age.

But it remained for Hanoverian times, and particularly the Victorian era, when the national taste reached its lowest ebb and English sculpture was at its worst, to banish beauty from great parts of *Westminster Abbey*. Then were hurled at the beautiful walls of that sacred building the most hideous abortions of white marble—cenotaph portrait-figures of statesmen and heroes, supported by weeping angels and half-nude allegorical forms, which only dishonour, with their shallow tears and affected display of grief, the

great names they commemorate. These attest to all time the vulgar sentiment and degraded taste of the period.

In our own day private memorials generally take the form of tombstones and obituary tablets, which do not pretend to be decorative.

The public memorials, upon which the nation lavishes so much money, are not, as a rule, erected in churches. If those to Prince Albert and Queen Victoria may be taken as typical, it is as well they remain outside. Of course, to those who think that the national taste in such matters is above suspicion, any criticism will appear prejudiced. Yet there must be many who feel—though they may not perhaps say so—that the Victoria Memorial is as unworthy to commemorate the name of a famous queen as to represent the taste of a great nation. It can only be said to perpetuate the worst traditions of that part of the queen's reign to which future historians will turn for examples of the



Photo.]

[Alinari.

21H CENTURY EQUESTRIAN FIGURE FROM ONE OF THE TOMBS
OF THE SCALIGERS AT VERONA. (Francesco Della Scala.)

depths to which a nation's taste may fall. It in no way represents the best taste of our own day.

But with such work we are not here concerned: the modern idea that a memorial must be constructed on a colossal scale to do justice to a nation's grief, at any rate, saves our churches from becoming receptacles for the worst expressions of popular taste. The accompanying illustration of an equestrian figure from the tomb of Can Grande Primo Della Scalla, *outside* the Church of *Sta. Maria Antica* at Verona, will show, nevertheless, that memorials intended for a position in the open air were treated, in the past, with the same artistic charm and dignity as those in the churches.

We have seen, however, what havoc can be wrought in churches and cathedrals by the intrusion of base and unworthy sculpture: and the above examination of the monuments of the past, cursory though it is, should be sufficient to establish



WELLINGTON MEMORIAL IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL.
(Alfred Stevens.)

a simple rule, applicable, in all ages, to church memorials—*unless a memorial forms a fitting and worthy adornment to the house of God, or takes the shape of a beautiful addition to the fabric or furniture of the building, it should not be allowed to intrude.*

There is no reason why a monument should not be a worthy tribute to the dead, and, at the same time, a sincere expression of the highest ideals of the living generation. Such was the work of Alfred Stevens—the Wellington Memorial, in *S. Paul's Cathedral*, which, at last, has been given its proper place in the building. It is probably the most beautiful monument that any country has raised since the end of the sixteenth century. There could be no better example of a work of art designed from the first, as the existing sketches show, to fill a particular space, and form a decorative feature, worthy alike of the building it adorns and the dead it commemorates.

Like the cathedral in which it stands, it

is one of the greatest works of art which the English nation has produced. Let us forget that only in our own day has justice been done to the conception of the great artist who gave it form, and let us learn from it something of the restraint of past ages, remembering that, if a memorial is beautiful, its function is accomplished for all time. After all, what could be more restrained, more dignified, and more honourable to a famous name than the simple epitaph placed over the grave of Sir Christopher Wren in his own great masterpiece?—

Si monumentum requiris, circumspice.

CHAPTER XV

Postscript

IT may appear to the reader of this little book that the author, who has laid a good deal of stress upon the apparent poverty and unworthiness of much of the artistic work of the present day, as it is represented in our churches, while at the same time enlarging upon the splendour and sincerity of that of the past, is one of those unhappy people who can see nothing that is good in the work of their own time.

This is very far indeed from being the case. Who, that has lived and pondered and felt with the present generation—joint-heir to its great heritage of thought, co-partner in its splendid aspirations and

ideals—would be willing to sell his birth-right for anything, however noble, in the past ?

But we have here been concerned with art as it takes its place—or fails to do so—in the service of the Church. And it is in this respect that the author cannot help feeling, and feeling strongly, that the art of the present day is not worthy of itself or of the great ages that have gone before.

The reason, I think, is not hard to find. For the time being, the Church has entirely ceased to dominate the thought of our age. The great movement, which first began to find expression in the writings of the Humanists in the fourteenth century, in asserting the moral and intellectual rights of the individual, and commending a delight in beauty for its own sake, has resulted in what we have come to recognize as the “modern spirit.” Much of the most valuable thought of the present time, much too of the deepest religious feeling, is to be found amongst those who

are not altogether in sympathy with the Church ; and art, no less than thought, has ceased to be governed, except in a general way, by the conventional ideals of orthodox Christianity.

This may, or may not, be a lasting state of affairs, but it is one that cannot be ignored. Until the Church has at least re-stated the eternal truths she represents, in such a way as to bring herself into sympathy with the ideals, the art, and the thought of an age which probably has more true religion and a deeper feeling for the spiritual meaning of things than any other in the history of the Christian Church, we cannot expect to find art's highest achievements either inspired by her teaching or enlisted in her service.

There is another point in which the author may be in danger of being misunderstood. The term "decorative art" has been constantly applied to work which, at first sight, would appear to have been conceived with other ends in view than

decoration. But there is one sense in which to be decorative is the distinguishing feature of all forms of painting, sculpture, and the plastic arts, as contrasted with music and literature. Assuming that the object of all art is to produce beauty, there is this difference in the arts—that music and literature, having no material substance, cannot possibly be decorative; while the representative arts, inasmuch as they are concerned with our material surroundings, cannot fail to be decorative without, in so far, failing to be beautiful. From this point of view it is impossible to draw any distinction between the beautiful filling of an empty or unsightly space, or the covering of a useful article with rich adornment of line or colour, and the more pictorial work of a narrative character. Art, in fact, may beautify a meaningless and unsatisfying thing by endowing it with wholly abstract beauty of form and colour, or it may take natural objects and re-express them in such a way that we

shall find in them a truer and more beautiful meaning than we could do without the artist's aid. But the motive in either case is to beautify.

However it may approach the subject-matter, the function of art is to re-state, to *dis-cover*, to find expression—in terms of beauty—for the underlying reality which is the soul and meaning of all material forms. The artist is a seer, and his art is the means by which he expresses to others whatever he sees more clearly than they ; therefore his work is not imitative, in the sense of copying as nearly as possible the outward forms of the things we see, for these are plain to all. But it is, in a sense, clairvoyant, since it reveals the spiritual in, and through, the material.

And is not music—the most abstract of the arts—also the most deeply moving to those who can appreciate its message, simply because it does not labour under the material limitations of the plastic arts ?

But even of decorative art it has been well said—

“We’re made so that we love
First when we see them painted things we have passed
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see,
And so they are better painted—better to us,
Which is the same thing. Art was given for that:
God uses us to help each other so,
Lending our minds out.”¹

¹ Robert Browning, *Fra Lippo Lippi*.

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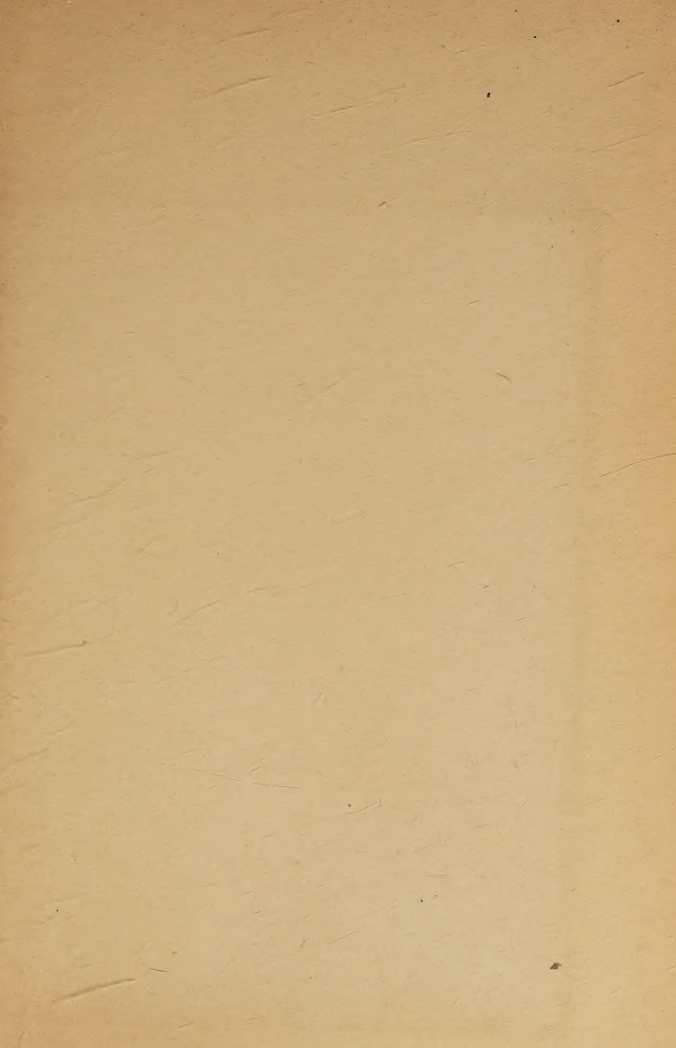
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